Lilith

INDEPENDENT, JEWISH & FRANKLY FEMINIST

Great Expense, Great Expectations

MOTHERHOOD IN THE LEAN-IN ERA

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Lilith

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*In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal; we come from the same earth."**

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*Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b

"Money is the bio-fuel that sustains transformative change."
—*Nessa Rapoport*

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independent, Jewish & frankly feminist

NICOLE HOLLANDER

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Maybe you smoked cigarettes a long time ago. Now? Not so likely. Smoking looks retrograde even in an anachronistic setting like TV's Mad Men. As the smoking seems retro, so too do the sexist attitudes and sexual harassment of that earlier era. Attitudes change, laws then follow suit. (No smoking in theaters or planes, in restaurants or in many public parks.)

And the Supreme Court of the United States has recognized gay marriage, overturning unjust laws that violated the civil rights of same-sex spouses. The rapid change in attitudes about LGBT issues has been remarkable. From the overt opprobrium during the 1980s AIDS epidemic to social and legal acceptance today? Less than 30 years, and a sea change.

Let's hope that very soon the attitudes toward women in Jewish divorce law will seem at least as retro as smoking, and that legal succor will follow. As with marriage equality in secular law, attitudes have to shift for new interpretations of Jewish law to take hold. June 2013 was quite a month for attempting such change: women by the hundreds wore tallitot and prayed out loud at the Western Wall in Jerusalem; a "summit" discussed radical ways of countering divorce injustice; and whole new category of Jewish female clergy emerged.

So why can't we cheer for these successes, however modest they may seem to some? Perhaps because we're a little skeptical. In the wake of an Agunah Summit in late June, we've done an in-office retrospective on our previous articles about Jewish women "chained" in their marriages. Under Jewish law, only the husband can instigate divorce proceedings. From this inequity springs the fact that many husbands extort money or child-custody concessions from their wives in exchange for authorizing the divorce. Blu Greenberg, a prime mover behind the summit and a Lilith contributing editor, first wrote about this subject for the magazine in 1976! (Track this coverage at Lilith.org, part of the stunning archive of back issues fully searchable at our new website.) Blu's oft-cited statement on how to change Jewish law: "Where there's a rabbinic will, there's a halakhic way." Yet four decades of activism have until now yielded little to free a woman powerless to extricate herself from a bad marriage.

Glass half empty. Some rabbis who control Jewish rabbinical courts say, with no concern for women in limbo, that change in divorce law must come "slowly." And the Women of the Wall, praying there on the first day of the Hebrew month of Av, were pelted with eggs, and more.

And yet…the first class of Maharats graduated; these Orthodox women trained as clergy are recognized as having authority to teach, lead, and interpret texts. Women deciding Jewish law? Unambivalently, we can cheer this opportunity and honor the male and female thinkers and teachers who've made this dream a reality. All three of the women graduates will be employed in rabbinical roles, though the graduates will be called not rabbi or "Rabba"—the female form of the noun—but MaHaRaT, an acronym for being learned in Torah. It's possible that with women becoming religious decision-makers in the Modern Orthodox world, they will help move Jewish law toward justice on the agunah issue. Glass half full.

Back to smoking, an unlikely but nonetheless useful marker for other changes. From the days when a lit cigarette was an accessory of elegance we've moved on to the New Yorker cartoon showing office workers in business suits sitting on a horizontal construction beam hanging over a cityscape. It's the last place they can smoke. The approval rating for smoking has tanked.

So…how do we measure these changes—by what has improved, in law and in attitude, or by our disappointments that there's still so much to be rectified?

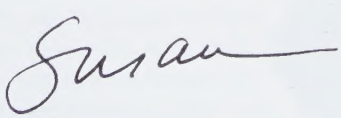
In some matters of women's rights, change has been maddeningly slow. My shortlist includes reproductive justice. The backward motion on abortion rights in many state legislatures terrifies me. In a worsening political climate for women, some states argue for criminalizing abortion after 12 weeks! The state of Mississippi trying to deny abortions to any woman more than six weeks into a pregnancy!

Even with the good news this season, there are some very messy corners….

And money. Even if they did have access, poor women often can't afford to pay for abortions. Or mammograms. All women are still, by every estimate, earning less than men comparably trained. Costs for prenatal care and child care are soaring for all. Single mothers in particular are struggling to feed their families. And wealthy women? Barbara Dobkin, a leading Jewish feminist activist and energetic world-changer, challenged me over breakfast this morning: "Tell me, where are the women who should be funding women's projects?" With a few notable exceptions, like Dobkin herself and other staunch supporters of feminist causes like Lilith, they are invisible.

Are we being unrealistic about wanting women's lives to improve during their lifetimes? Are our standards too high as we complain that perfection is not within our grasp today?

One of my daughters, when she was an adolescent, used to tell me that I was quick to notice the corner of her bedroom that was still untidy, and chary with praise for the rest of the room she had put in order. Maybe I really am the cranky, unappreciative person she then thought me to be. But when we express our happiness unreservedly for the real gains, including the gloriously pioneering Maharats, we've also got to notice the corners—very big corners now—where the mess is still there.



Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor in Chief

PHOTO: DAVID GREENSPUN

The recipes are just an excuse to share a story.

It's only worth being the first woman anything if there are plausible candidates to be the second.

Making traditional embroidery is hardly rebellious.

Sex is always something we can't control — we have to defend against it.

My mother had a completely passive view of femininity.

VOICES

Traditionally the voice of a Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. These pages are for news about Jewish women in our own strong voices.

Tziporah Salamon & the Art of Getting Dressed

Tziporah Salamon, on her bright-colored Italian bicycle, always wearing extraordinary outfits, turns heads wherever in Manhattan she rides. Lucky for me, a friend invited me to one of Salamon's private two-hour sessions on "The Art of Dressing." Before I went, I googled Salamon and discovered that she's regularly photographed by **Bill Cunningham** for his renowned "On the Street" columns for The New York Times, has performed her one-woman show at the Rubin Gallery of Art, is one of the stars of last winter's Lanvin couture ads (catch her on YouTube), and was just spotlighted in **Ari Seth Cohen**'s new book *Advanced Style*.

I'd never encountered anyone who took such pains with every tiny choice involved in putting together each ensemble she donned that evening in her "class." While six or eight women watched raptly, she created multi-layered outfits out of vintage pieces or custom-made elements, each accessorized with painstaking precision. One pillbox hat is not like another, it turns out.

Salamon, 60, was born in Netanya, Israel, and at nine moved to the U.S. with her Holocaust-survivor parents, he a tailor and she a seamstress. Always obsessed with fabrics and fashion, Salamon went off to do graduate work in psychology in Berkeley. But even as an activist in the nascent days of the women's liberation movement, she said, she was reading Vogue hidden behind Ms. magazine!

She starts each performance of her personal style announcing that an honest look in the mirror "to know your own body" is the way getting dressed must start. Her own basic garments are pants that are a kind of mid-calf pantaloon and a snug-fitting jersey. The pants—loose at the calf because she decided her lower legs are now too muscular from bike riding to be on display—she has copied in different colors from a couture pair she bought years ago. And then the fun really begins. With a rack of vintage items and bargain designer finds (and a student intern from a local fashion high school to help her hang and fold as she goes along), Salamon layers on the looks. One outfit consists of a shirt, sweater with pom-pom buttons, jacket also with pom-poms (she threads them through alternate buttonholes for full effect) topped with a short white fur capelet. Then come the earrings, scarf, and perfect cloche-like hat. "I love the *pierrot* look," she said.

The paradox is that Tziporah Salamon is authentically terrific at what she does, though her unusual, even *outré* style choices would on almost anyone else simply be dismissed as eccentric. Truth is, on anyone else, this getup would indeed look clownish. But the devotion to the details is redemptive. Salamon's mantra: "I am a painter. My body is my canvas." Sometimes, she said, it takes her a decade or more to decide that an outfit is completed according to her demanding standards of artistic perfection. She scouts thrift shops, vintage clothing fairs, and the legendary Brimfield marketplace in Massachusetts for the perfect pocketbook, or even the perfect pom-pom to complete an outfit.

Her life is decidedly non-luxurious; she lives in a modest Manhattan apartment, often paying for her vintage indulgences in monthly installments. She works as a part-time teacher, gives her classes in private homes and at conferences, and though trained as a psychologist, she says her highest paying job was one she worked for years—as a hat-check person (we once would have said girl) in a fancy New York restaurant; she got huge tips from patrons excited to see what she was wearing. In a stint as a salesperson at Bergdorf Goodman, she was told not to outshine the clientele.

You can see Tziporah Salamon in context—and in assorted extraordinary outfits—at *tziporahsalamon.com*. She attributes her appreciation for the legitimacy of her clothes consciousness to an encounter with **Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi**, who told her that she brings radiance into the word by dressing so beautifully. Radiance may be the result, but what are the motivating forces behind her really quite thrilling efforts to be so constantly and consciously on display? "My parents were Holocaust survivors, and they let me know that the idea was to keep down, not call attention to yourself," she said, making a "keep down" motion with both hands. "But now," she announced, raising her arms high, "I am out there."

SUSAN WEIDMAN SCHNEIDER

FROM ADVANCED STYLE BY ARI SETH COHEN, PUBLISHED BY POWERHOUSE BOOKS

Not Your Traditional Ketubah

This egalitarian ketubah is designed by **Sonia Gordon-Walinsky**. More at *pasukart.com*.

Looked at one way, my wedding was pretty traditional. For many of our guests it was probably one of the more traditional Jewish weddings they'd ever attended.

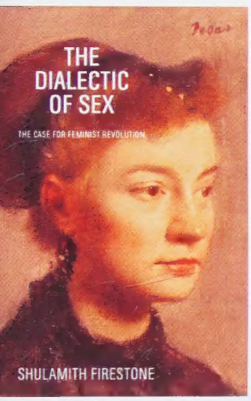
Looked at another way, there were two brides. And one of them is a Conservative rabbi. So... not entirely traditional.

For our traditional/nontraditional event, we altered the wording of some of the wedding blessings. For example, in the *erusin* ceremony (the betrothal, in which we exchanged rings), we inserted first the words "ever-progressing and ever-evolving" before the traditional wording about "laws of Moses and Israel." (This change actually articulates for us the mission statement of Conservative Judaism—and I see it as a useful and worthy addition to straight wedding contracts, too.)

People have been curious about how we came up with the ceremony, the adapted liturgy, and the text for the *ketubah*, the traditional Jewish marriage contract. That story is short: we borrowed everything from **Rabbis Jaimee and Helayne Shalhevet**, Reform rabbis married to one another, who constructed a moving, quintessentially Jewish ceremony that is less "gay" than it is "egalitarian"—and is, one might even venture, "feminist."

Imagine: a ketubah with no act of purchase, and no mention of goats! (Yes, goats really do appear in the original Hebrew and Aramaic.) And a ceremony that acknowledges the laws of Moses and Israel to be evolving! Having taken these strides, I look forward to the day I can announce: Traditional egalitarian weddings—they're not just for the gay community anymore!

MELANIE WEISS



Graveside Honors for a Feminist Foremother

Shulamith Firestone *(1945-2012), a deeply original thinker, was a founding member of several early feminist groups of the 1970s: the New York Radical Women, Redstockings and New York Radical Feminists. Her book* The Dialectic of Sex *is a foundational text of the women's liberation movement. Here, some of the words spoken at her funeral.*

"My mother had this completely passive view of femininity that was governed by what she regarded as 'what Jewish women do'," Shulamith's sister, [Rabbi] **Tirzah** [Firestone] said. Shulamith endlessly questioned her parents' tenets. When she asked [her father] **Sol** why she had to make her brother's bed, he told her, "Because you're a girl."

Firestone was buried, in a traditional Orthodox funeral, in a Long Island cemetery, where her maternal grandparents are interred. Ten male relatives made up a minyan. None of her feminist comrades were invited. "At the end of the day, the old-time religion asserted itself," Tirzah said. [Her brother] **Ezra** gave a eulogy. He lives in Brooklyn, where he works as an insurance salesman, but he hadn't spoken to Shulamith in years, and he broke down several times as he told how she, more than anyone else in the family, had tended to him as a child and taught him compassion. He recalled a story she told him when he was a boy, about a man on a train who realized that he had dropped a glove on the platform and, as the train left the station, dropped the other glove from the window, so that someone could have a pair. Then he lamented Shulamith's "tragic" failure to make a "good marriage" and have children "who would be devoted to her."

When Tirzah's turn came to give a eulogy, she addressed Ezra. "I said to him, 'Excuse me, but with all due respect, Shulie was a model for Jewish women and girls everywhere, for women and girls everywhere. She had children—she influenced thousands of women to have new thoughts, to lead new lives. I am who I am, and a lot of women are who they are, because of Shulie.'"

From "Death of a Revolutionary," by SUSAN FALUDI, The New Yorker, April 15, 2013.

What happens after the glass ceiling shatters?

"It's only worth being the first woman anything if at the point you stop being executive editor there are other women, hopefully lots of them, who are plausible candidates to be the second."

From "New York Times Editor Jill Abramson Talks Boston and Female Editors," by NINA STROCHLIC at *thedailybeast.com*, May 7, 2013.

Who's entitled to pray, and where? And *how*?

The Women of the Wall originated in 1988 as a Rosh Hodesh gathering of women who wanted to pray together at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. They wanted to be able to pray in a tallit and tefillin and read from the Torah in women-led and women-only services, so as to comply with Orthodox Jewish religious law. Who would have thought that, nearly 25 years later, this would still be such a fraught issue? Today, women still meet every month to celebrate Rosh Hodesh—only now with police protection because of an April 25 Jerusalem District Court decision that they are not violating the law by exercising their religious freedom. And the right to pray at the Wall as one chooses has become a bellwether for other kinds of religious and civil liberty issues in the State of Israel.

Women of the Wall, 2013

IMAGE COURTESY OF WOMEN OF THE WALL

Thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews tried to block a liberal women's group from praying at the Western Wall on Friday morning [May 10], creating a tense standoff in the latest flash point of a broader battle over religion and identity that has engulfed Israel...

Rabbi Israel Eichler, an ultra-Orthodox member of Parliament, warned that "if the state of Israel fights" the ultra-Orthodox, in Hebrew called Haredim, "it may win, but it will be erased from the face of the Earth."

"There were thousands of seminary girls there today," he said. "Each one of them will have 10 children. That is our victory."...

Menachem Friedman, a sociology professor at Bar Ilan University who has studied the Haredi society, said that while a universal military draft and cut in subsidies are more substantive issues, "gender is the most vulnerable."

"The most threatening thing for the Haredi society is the mixture," Professor Friedman said. "Sex is always something we can't control—we have to defend against it, we have to separate, to make it very clear separation between men and women. Why? Because sex is really penetrating inside everyone, even the most sacred man is not protected. That is the main idea of ultra-Orthodoxy."

From "Standoff at Western Wall Over Praying by Women" by JODI RUDOREN for the New York Times, May 10, 2013.

The Back Story: Women of the Wall, 1989

AMY STONE, *in a May 9, 2013, Lilith blog post:*

My one ongoing—up to the present—connection to the Wall has been my diminishing supply of Women of the Wall greeting cards with a black-and-white photograph by **Barbara Gingold**, dated 1989. In this first gathering, women sweetly read from prayer books in front of the Wall. At least one is wearing a traditional tallit and a kippah. On the back: "Proceeds from the sale of this card help support the Women of the Wall in their efforts to advance the status of women in Judaism." Thanks for hanging in there, Women of the Wall.

PHOTO BY BARBARA GINGOLD

BARBARA GINGOLD *responds:*

I'd say that **Rivka Haut** (L.) and **Geela Rayzel Robinson** (now Raphael) (R.) were reading the Torah that remarkable day with more determination than sweetness. When I shot that picture—after years of photographing Jewish women's events from the late 1960s on, including the first Jewish women's prayer group, the first Jewish feminist conferences in New York and in Israel, even the first meetings of Lilith's future editors—I knew that this moment at the Kotel was historic. The thought went through my head: "This is it, the culmination. Now I can stop taking pictures."

Little did I imagine that 25 years or so of battles over the Wall would follow, leaving me (and many other Israelis) alienated from the place, furious that the ultra-Orthodox appropriation of what had been the national as well as the spiritual heart of Israel led the rest of us to simply abandon or flee it. The battle's not won yet. But I want to thank all of WoW's overseas supporters for their help all these years. This has been an empowering example of Israel-Diaspora relations and interdependence—none of us could have done what we did without our counterparts overseas.

Making Lace and Money

In the old stone house where they work, 10 Druze women greeted me, most of them dressed in traditional clothing with white head covers hiding their hair and obscuring their faces. A few of the women were toying with the fabric, alternately masking and unmasking their mouths

What was I doing there? During the Second Lebanon War, in 2006, our Jewish Federation in New Jersey was looking for a way to help people living in northern Israel, and focused on a project for women's advancement in the Druze village of Hurfeish. (Druze are a monotheistic religious sect described as an offshoot of Ismaili Islam).

In my role as Israel Center Associate, I decided to visit the village and meet the women participating in this initiative.

Afaf Ganem, the women's advancement coordinator, explained that this women's group, the "Lace Makers," is a cultural and social initiative to advance Druze women's status through business. Most women in the village had been unemployed, and the founding idea was to take traditional Druze handicrafts—knitting, embroidery, and clothes-making—and transform them into marketable items. When this female artistry was seen publicly, modern Israeli society saw how valuable the product is and—importantly—made the work profitable both for the artisans and for the village.

"At first," Ganem recalled, "nobody thought that we would be successful in attracting people to the village." For women who live in a society governed by tradition, earning a living independently from men is nothing short of transformative.

Yet, since there was no precedent for this kind of women's work having commercial value, some village men viewed the initiative with concern, fearing it as a potential threat to Druze social order. By deliberately linking it to the larger economic effort, the women's success reflected back onto the whole village.

It was the very nature of the women's work that soon eased the tension; making traditional embroidery could hardly be labeled rebellious. And the growing interest around the initiative led to a significant increase in tourism, creating new job opportunities and financial growth that benefited the entire village.

Embroidery can hardly be labeled rebellious—except when it transforms women living in a society governed by tradition.

Most of the women I met were religious, and they ranged in age from 34 to 61. Despite the fact that some had studied in colleges outside the village, they still worried that if they attended the meetings their absence from home would somehow harm their families. Consequently, the Lace Makers meetings were scheduled for late on Monday mornings, when their children would be at school and their husbands at work. "This is our sanctuary," one of the women commented with a smile. The others nodded their agreement.

When I asked what they talked about, the oldest woman replied with a wink that the best way of catching up with the village gossip was to attend their Monday sessions. The women prepared favorite foods and brought them, and talked about discovering their true selves for the first time, forming new friendships as they worked on their different handicrafts. A considerable number were single women in their late 30s and 40s, and despite the traditional nature of their culture, it seems that the group has found a way to offer support and understanding to all its members.

When it was time for me to leave, the women surprised me with a pair of thick, beautifully knitted socks, meant to keep me warm until I marry.

NATALIE ELGRABLI

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER METROWEST, NJ

We Were Slaves

The Jewish Community Unites Against Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking—holding women, often very young women, as prisoners to serve in the sex trade. Not a subject usually discussed in Jewish circles. But a groundbreaking conference in April 2013, sponsored by the UJA-Federation of New York, featured an anonymous young woman who managed to escape from her bondage and her pimp. It also spotlighted resources for victims, and heard from, among others, Atlanta rabbi **Rachael Bregman,** *who called for stopping the problem at the demand side: the men who use these women for sex.*

Here is one example of how sexual slavery can happen, as we heard at the conference. **Sarah** (not her real name), now in her early 20s, was raised in a quiet suburb in a Jewish home. Molested by a neighbor when she was nine, she never told; in her home, they never talked about sex. In her early teens she withdrew, showing signs of loneliness and vulnerability. A man in his twenties saw her and started talking to her after school as she stood alone. He selected Sarah carefully, ignoring the confident girls and focusing on vulnerable prey. "You're so beautiful. You're so wonderful," he told her.

Suddenly, she felt visible, and more alive. He took her out, gave her nice things. She was curious to know more about sex since it had been so forbidden at home. He had sex with her. She didn't like it, but by then it was too late. He told her she owed him for the gifts he had given her, and if she did not pay up he would beat her and rape her little sister. To make it up to him, she had to sell her body. He forced her to have sex with multiple partners each night, and to bring in cash—all of which he kept. When she fell short, he beat her, raped her, tore her clothes, forcing her to need more money from him to clothe herself. She was enslaved. As we learned at the conference, this is a typical approach for pimps to find, keep, control and terrorize their slaves.

In a Human Rights Shabbat sermon, I offered the following: If sex trafficking tramples on the basic human rights of the victims—the prostitutes themselves, who should more properly be called sex slaves—let's consider the buyers, the "johns," as the perpetrators of this denial of rights.

In a meeting in Atlanta, I mentioned these johns, and the laws that privilege them over the women: lower fines, shorter jail sentences and more frequently waived convictions. **Lisa Williams,** executive director of Wellspring Living for Girls, which provides victim services, interrupted. "We do not have to give these monsters such a nice name." So what do we call them instead? "Rapists." Then she added, "Or sexual predators, if you must."

So who are these predators? The majority of the buyers are white, middle- and upper-middle-class men, usually married with children. They can look like those usually gathered in a sanctuary on Shabbat. They are us. If not the people sitting next to you, then our friends, our family.

Most efforts to address human trafficking focus on victim services [see box]. While these are essential, they don't address the problem's sources. One way to curtail the trafficking of human beings as sex slaves is to curtail the demand.

Reduce the *demand* to reduce the *supply*. Educate young men on the realities of trafficking, the reasons women enter prostitution, the extent of violence in prostitution, and the physical and psychological harm suffered by prostituted individuals. Boys need to learn, too, about the conflicted feelings of men who use women in prostitution, and the potential adverse consequences that buying a person for sex can have on relationships with their own future romantic partners.

Stanch the *demand* side in the sex-for-hire industry. *Jewish* men are "johns" too.

Let us demand from ourselves that we act to treat others as people, not property. We stand against the demand for buying and selling of people for sexual services by declaring that a john is not an innocent consumer, but indeed is a sexual predator.

RABBI RACHAEL BREGMAN

HOW TO FIGHT MODERN DAY SEX SLAVERY

Train for Advocacy

FAIR (Free, Aware, Inspired, Restored) Girls provides comprehensive training to ensure that girls at high risk for being trafficked or sexually abused are better identified and protected. A fellowship program offers an intensive 12-week experience preparing future leaders in the anti-trafficking movement. FAIR Girls has trained over 175 young professionals and students who have gone on to work in public policy, international and local nonprofits, government jobs, and legal and social service positions. *fairgirls.org*

Help Free the Victims

A new hotline for tips about sex trafficking—The Polaris Project—helps people report suspected abuses to specialized human trafficking task forces and service providers. The project pushes for stronger federal and state laws through the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, which conducts trainings and helps connect survivors of human trafficking with vital services. There's also an online library, and NHTRC provides training and technical assistance to strengthen local anti-trafficking efforts. Call 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733). *polarisproject.org*

Cut the Trafficking Pipeline

Make sure that corporations and government supply chains are free from human trafficking, forced labor and other forms of modern slavery. The Alliance to End Sex Trafficking (ATEST) is a coalition of U.S.-based human rights organizations working to end the slavery of labor and sex trafficking at home and around the world, and empowering survivors with tools for recovery. ATEST is led and supported by Humanity United, a foundation committed to advancing human freedom. *endslaveryandtrafficking.org*

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Germany's Jewish Feminists

GERMANY I'm a stranger here myself, visiting this spring. But thanks to Lilith connections, I'm welcomed by German Jewish feminists.

They're part of the crazy mix of German Jews who have come back from near extinction to become the fastest-growing Jewish population in Western Europe. While Orthodox Judaism dominates the Jewish establishment, most Jews are non-religious immigrants from the Former Soviet Union—some 200,000, most of whom are not halakhically Jewish.

A Jewish feminist born in East Berlin, **Lara Daemmig** explains the birth of the Bet Debora organization in Berlin in 1998. She and two other women "decided to organize a conference of women rabbis in Europe. We didn't even know if there were any." A year later, a crowd of 200 attended the "European Conference of Women Rabbis, Cantors, Scholars and All Spiritually Interested Jewish Women and Men." (Spring 2013 Lilith reported on a recent Bet Debora conference in Vienna.) Today Daemmig co-chairs Bet Debora Germany.

Born in Vienna, **Malin Kundi** grew up being told, "Your grandmother is Jewish but we're not." Kundi and her girlfriend arrived in Berlin just after the Wall came down. Her first seder was in Berlin—a lesbian feminist intercultural milestone with an orange on the seder plate and Afro Germans, migrant women and women of color. Now 49, she's settled in Cologne, a photographer connected with Bet Debora.

Susanne Jakubowski, born in Poland, defied the Stuttgart Orthodox rabbi who challenged her Judaism in order to get her off the board of directors and out of Jewish life in the state-wide Jewish Religious Community. Jakubowski, now 61, an architect and CEO of her firm, had emigrated with her family to Israel, then Stuttgart. Her father was Jewish, her mother wasn't. Once the non-Orthodox *beit din* [Jewish religious court] ruled that she was Jewish, she organized the community's liberal minyan.

Last year, just one year after the start of this liberal minyan, 80 worshippers filled a chapel to overflowing for the region's first liberal bat mitzvah since the Holocaust. Definitely unorthodox: men and women sitting together, some women wearing a tallit and yarmulke, the service in Hebrew with German and Russian, and the bat mitzvah girl in tallit, reading from the Torah. Not radical by American standards but even the liberal Pestalozzistrasse synagogue in Berlin separates men and women and has no aliyah for women.

Jewish feminism is still developing in Germany.

AMY STONE

A Jewish Foodie's New Flavors

Cooking is about love. It's a clichéd trope, but any busy parent who finds the time to prepare dinner understands its deep truth. Same goes for the seasoned professional chef who, behind the sullied chef's whites and exhausting hours knows why she got into the business in the first place: to feed, nurture, and love through food.

Writing a cookbook is a little different. As a food writer, I am in the storytelling business. The articles I write bring me out into the world—into people's kitchens and lives and, most importantly, into conversations. Often I include a recipe to punctuate the narrative, but ultimately the recipes are just an excuse to share a story.

When I began my cookbook *Modern Jewish Cooking*, to be published by Chronicle Books in 2015, I knew things would change. My overarching goal was to bring Jewish cooking, Old World and New, to today's seasonal kitchen to uncover and share the tradition's best flavors.

But with 175 recipes to develop and 10 months to do it, I entered into a long-distance sprint. Life has narrowed to the four walls of my tiny Brooklyn kitchen, and fallen into a continuous loop of chopping, measuring, sautéing, and washing up. The trips I take to the grocery store are often the day's social highlight.

Some recipes come together quickly; others take four or five attempts to get just right. And unlike cooking a meal for friends, the majority of the dishes I make do not have an intended audience. Usually it's just me, the food, my notes, and a surprisingly persistent feeling of hunger. Not for food, but for connection.

My husband's eagerness to play the role of taster-in-chief helps. And in an effort to not waste food, I regularly invite neighbors to come over bearing Tupperware. Most recently, I started a blog at *modernjewishcooking.tumblr.com*, ostensibly to chronicle the process of writing a cookbook, and share recipes along the way. But really the blog is an attempt to tap back into my gratitude for the work I do by reconnecting with the people I do it for.

Thick in the weeds of the project, I am working on hazy faith that this cookbook will inspire people to explore Jewish food in new, meaningful ways. Until then, the blog is where I will go between the solitary chopping to stop, breathe, and serve forth.

LEAH KOENIG

Toasted Almond Israeli Couscous serves 6-8

Unlike regular couscous, which is made up of tiny pasta granules formed from semolina flour and water, Israeli couscous (called ptitim, or "crumbles" in Hebrew) comes in larger, toasted pearls that make a satisfyingly chewy base for any number of side dishes. I almost exclusively cook Israeli couscous (like many grains) in broth instead of water, which gives it an added boost of flavor. Here, the cooked grain gets tossed with silky cooked shallots, a bit of lemon juice, and showering of crunchy sliced almonds, for a dish that comes together quickly on a weeknight, but feels special enough to serve for Shabbat or a holiday.

3/4 cup sliced almonds
3 1/2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
2 sprigs fresh thyme
3 cups Israeli couscous
3 tbs extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
6 medium shallots halved lengthwise & thinly sliced
salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tbs freshly squeezed lemon juice
Chopped fresh parsley, for serving

1. Add sliced almonds to a small pan set over medium heat; cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant and golden brown, 5-7 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool.

2. Add the broth and thyme to a medium pot set over high heat; bring to a boil. Stir in couscous, lower heat to low, cover and cook until liquid is absorbed, 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand for 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork and transfer to a large bowl; discard the thyme.

3. Meanwhile, heat the 3 tablespoons olive oil in a medium skillet set over medium heat. Add the shallots, season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until softened and browned, about 7-8 minutes. Add cooked shallots, toasted almonds and lemon juice to the couscous, drizzle with a little more olive oil, and toss to combine. Season again with salt and pepper, and serve topped with chopped parsley.

2013 Fiction Prize Winner

Angel

by GAIL HAREVEN
translated from the Hebrew by ORA CUMMINGS

The woman had not intended to meet an angel. She had planned to finish grading the statistics exams before Shai woke up and started demanding his bottle. She might even have enough time to make a few phone calls. Angels were definitely not on the agenda. If she gave any thought to it at all, angels were in complete contradiction to her worldview, but Mira had no recollection of ever having given the issue of angels so much as a passing thought.

The angel appeared suddenly. She raised her eyes from the sheet of paper, rubbed her neck a little, tilted her head slightly and there he was, right on the enclosed balcony behind her. He was surprisingly large—the size of a grown man—and it later occurred to her that this apparition should have been frightening. Mira thought he was too big. Entities of that kind were supposed to be able to stand on the heads of pins or fly into drawers, not to embarrass you with their overgrown bodies—although body might not be quite the right description here. He was fairly solid in the middle and his blurred edges blended into the early morning sun. He was wearing something with long folds and perhaps it was not a he but a she, how could anyone tell and maybe these descriptions, too, were not quite accurate.

"Go away," she told him and rubbed her eyes behind the lenses of her reading glasses. The angel made no response. He did have ears, cute little ones, behind his long curls. With a sharp movement, Mira turned her chair.

"Go away," she repeated, "Go. There is nothing for you here." But the angel neither moved nor disappeared. He did not even blink. Mira took a deep breath. "Look," she said, "I realize what you are. Don't think that I don't. It's beautiful... it's impressive, but I don't feel like dealing with it right now." He really was beautiful, dipped as he was in a sweet luminosity, shining in a wavy shimmer of light. It occurred to her that this was the kind of effect Steven Spielberg would have liked to be able to produce.

"The thing is," she said, "that I am quite sure there's been a mistake. Not, heaven forbid, that you are a mistake. I don't mean to insult you. You've got me completely convinced. But I think you must have gotten the wrong address, because it's quite obvious to me that you're not my dream. Maybe you belong to the lady downstairs? She's into crystals and stones and you might be just the thing for her."

The angel made no reply. Perhaps he did not understand the language, or maybe angels don't speak—they just stand there waiting for you to be awestruck. On second thought, it didn't seem quite right for the downstairs neighbor, either, which made the wrong-address theory slightly more sinister, because it was now absolutely clear that this shining insect had intended to land in a completely different time and somewhere else altogether. And what if he had no way out? Like a car that had taken a wrong turn off the motorway and had no way of turning around and climbing back on again without taking a terrible risk. She would never have thought of hurting him and, even if he had arrived on an erroneous mission, she'd be sorry if he was punished for it, terribly sorry. She was coming very close to being full of remorse at the possible fate of this mute, wide-eyed creature, who had either fallen upon her or been sent to her, God knows from where, but mothers cannot go around identifying with just anybody's fate. Wasn't that the secret of motherhood: right or wrong, your own child came first? And, as far as she was concerned, angels were simply not part of the plan. Were it not smack in the middle of Passover, and had the nursery school not been closed for the day, she might have chosen to spend some more time with the extraordinary creature, which, for some reason, did not particularly surprise her. Why didn't it? She'd think about that later, not now.

"Let's do something like this," said Mira, "I'll turn back to my desk and grade another three exams. I'll pick a few that are full of mistakes so that it'll take at least fifteen minutes to correct them. Only then will I look up again and—let's be quite clear about this—by then I expect you to have taken advantage of the time I've given you to disappear." And returning to the exams on her desk, she was struck by the thought that he was probably not allowed to disappear right in front of her, which would be like giving a magic trick away, or undressing before friends at the beach—something quite different from turning up already dressed in a swimsuit. Immodest behavior, it was called. There was even some municipal law against it.

Seven minutes went by without Mira grading a single exam paper. She closed her eyes, never losing touch with time, giving herself up to the warm feeling on her back, like sunbathing. She did not doubt her senses for a moment. Angels do not arouse anxiety, not even this particular one. And she could smell the scent of honeysuckle from the garden below, garlic from the restaurant, sense the relative quiet of the town which had emptied for the vacation; and hear a number 62 bus letting off steam at the bus stop. Nice early summer weather, pleasantness in the air, honey flowing through your veins and only a fool thinks he knows everything and that everything is easily understood. Never mind. Never mind. Never mind what? After all, what's wrong with spending a few minutes like this, on the balcony with an angel?

Shai woke up without crying for a change and it was only what is known as maternal instinct that caused Mira to open her eyes and see him standing at the door. The angel held out his arms and her son, chuckling, held his arms out, too.

"No!" With a single move, she rose quickly and swept up her son, something cold and pale replacing the denseness in her veins. "You mustn't!"

The angel floated a step toward them, still not blinking, and smiled, bringing dimples to his face. Even the swift motion did nothing to alarm Shai, who only laughed louder, and the angel's infectious laughter made the child laugh all the more, squirming as if she were tickling him, trying to free himself to run to the winged creature. What does he want? What does he want? I wish he'd go away. What a fool I've been for doing nothing until now. What is this awful paralysis he's inflicted on me?

With one arm she held her son close—his head had already slipped down to her stomach—with the other she lashed out through what? Through a scorching nothingness. Before raising her hand to her mouth, she managed to slide the glass door shut.

"Man," said Shai and dropped to the floor. Beyond the glass door, the angel moved its wings and then spread them to their full size until they touched the shutters with their tips. Circles of sunlight drew bright, transparent colors on the lintel, dots of

CAROL PHILIPS, CAROLPHILIPSART.COM

dancing hypnotic light, rising and falling from the tips of the bare toes slightly above the floor and up to the gold of the curls. There was a shocked feeling in her fingers but she was not yet free to examine them.

"You want," said the deeply moved child. He still hadn't learned to refer to himself as "I." "Want." It had blue, spiteful European eyes, the angel. Veiled, like those of a psychopath. Hiding plans that no one could understand. How could she not have noticed it before?

"Go away. We don't like you. Clear off." Still, she looked vulnerable. From one of the adjacent apartments she could hear the beeps of the midday news broadcast.

Looking straight at them, the angel was moving in place — tiny dance steps full of ethereal charm. She did not like this beauty that belonged to nothing and scalded your hands. Holding her son by his shoulders, close to her knees, Mira retreated slowly, walking backward.

Perhaps it can't see them. Like blind man's eyes. Carved eyes. Eyes that saw something else altogether, in another time. Who made it like this, so out of place? Spread out it took up half the balcony, like some expensive but unnecessary artifact you'd inherited. How would it get out?

"Come on, you can have some Rice Krispies," she said to her son.

The angel lowered its neck and, as if in slow motion, brought a wing up to its face. And maybe it wasn't the movement that was slow but that time had slowed down, as the light grew stronger around the angel and two perfect tears rolled out of its eyes. Shai grimaced in unfamiliar sorrow. He was two and a half and had never, until then, suffered another being's pain. Now he was not hurt, not angry, not frightened, but his chin started to tremble and his eyes filled with tears, because the image on the other side of the glass was weeping.

Mira, on the other hand, was merely annoyed at the sight of the crying angel. Pretty tears did not engender real pity. As far as she was concerned, he could take his weeping elsewhere, because she was now completely oblivious to the beauty. And what was that dank smell? That smell he was emitting of damp leaf mold? Walking backwards, she managed to navigate her son into the kitchen.

"Do you want some Rice Krispies? Here, Mommy's getting you some Rice Krispies. Shall I make you a bottle?"

"Man," Shai said and tried to dodge back into the living room.

"It wasn't a man," said Mira and picked her son up again. She held him with one hand and poured water into the kettle with the other. She didn't have much time to think but the words came with a speed that she was later proud of: It's not a man, sweetie. It's Peter Pan.

"Petah-Pan," he repeated after her, as she held him captive in his high chair. "Petah-Pan."

When she returned alone to the living room, the angel was no longer there. It had disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. Had she been capable of it, she would have sat down for a while to contemplate what had just happened, but when a child starts kicking around in its high chair, a woman has no time for fantasies. She changed Shai's clothes and took him to visit his friend from nursery school, a toddler whose mother was an acquaintance of hers but not quite a friend, and she would never have thought of telling her about it. Indeed, it would not have occurred to her to tell someone — anyone who hadn't seen it would not have understood, and even she, who had seen it, did not understand. Because what on earth could you expect to get out of a story like this anyway? And what possible meaning could you attach to an angel? She didn't even tell her husband, who wanted to know what she had done to her hand. "Nothing," she said, "I just burned myself on the oven," because she saw no reason to worry him.

It had blue, spiteful European eyes, the angel. How could she not have noticed before?

For several weeks afterwards she was afraid that the angel would return, but her fear was restricted to a thought, not a gut feeling. Whether or not there was an explanation for the strange apparition, it was obviously something on the very edge of the margin of statistics. It was a rare event, negligible in essence and, as such, incapable of bearing a message of any kind. Also, she reckoned in retrospect, the occurrence had posed no immediate physical danger. She knew that she had seen an "angel," and she was equally sure that it had been a "good angel," one who would not have consciously caused her any harm.

"Remember once, I didn't go to school and I stayed home alone with you, and we saw Peter Pan?" Shai asked her suddenly one day almost a year later as she was shampooing his hair in the shower.

"Of course. We saw Peter Pan," she forced herself to say. Her son was quiet for a moment and only when she held the towel open for him to walk into did he say, "On the DVD in nursery school, there's a different Peter Pan."

Shai was seventeen when he began writing poems and even had several of them published. Mira, who didn't understand a lot about poetry, would read his poems with tense caution. But no angels ever appeared in them, and neither did any other winged creatures. Except for a fly that returned twice, but there are plenty of flies in the world, and what meaning can a fly have, anyway.

GAIL HAREVEN *is the author of 14 books including the novel* Confessions of Noa Weber. *Her short story "The Slows" appeared in The New Yorker. Her novel* Lies: First Person *is forthcoming from Open Letter. In Israel she received the Sapir Prize and the Prime Minister's Prize. In the U.S. she was awarded Three Percent's Best Translated Book Award.*

Of an Honorable Antiquity

Poet Laureate Maxine Kumin Celebrates Her Confederate Great-Grandfather

poetry by MAXINE KUMIN
introduction by SUSAN SCHNUR

JOHN HESSION

"*May we carry our mothers forth in our bellies*," wrote renowned poet, Pulitzer Prize winner, and United States poet laureate, Maxine Kumin. It's a line that I would regularly quote when I wrote baby-naming ceremonies as a rabbi. Later, when our family kept goats and chickens and I'd find myself, of an afternoon, sweeping out the hen house, I'd think of Kumin: "*the disciplined life of the barnyard.*" Kumin often wrote in a plain style about farm chores, and bred Arabian and quarter horses on her farm, PoBiz, in New Hampshire.

Mostly, though, I thought of Kumin when I was stuck with more than my fair share of parenting. She and poet Anne Sexton famously became friends when, chafing at suburban housewifery in the 1950's, they took an adult ed. poetry workshop that belatedly started their careers. After Sexton's suicide, Kumin wrote many poems to her (she called Sexton "*a better sister than any I … could have conjured*"), including one in which she wears Sexton's jacket and writes, sacramentally, "*I will be years … leaning my ribs against this durable cloth.*"

It came as a wonderful surprise, then, to see that Kumin, 88, had sent Lilith two very Jewish poems about her great-grandfather, Elias Rosenberg, along with accompanying text. I'd been aware of Kumin's feminist, and broadly maternal, sensibility, but not of her Jewish one, and I called her at PoBiz Farm to talk about the poems and to ask why she'd written about her great-grandfather.

"He speaks to me because he's the farthest back," she said. "And because my mother had told me a wonderful detail. That he was a redhead who never cut his beard. He wore it tucked into his belt."

"I have this three-page letter of his, from 1895, hanging framed on my study wall, that gave rise to the poem, 'For My Great-Grandfather: A Message Long Overdue.' I marvel at the descriptive language, at the anguished effort this man is making in his non-native tongue to heal a family rift," a rift occasioned by Elias having married, after the death of his wife, a much younger woman. "He was a poet."

Elias wrote the three-page letter after Kumin's mother had been born and he'd received a photo of the young family. "It is impossible for me to gaze on the picture before me as portrayed by the Artist and not be impressed with the realization that they are My People," he wrote, "and to pray that God in His Infinite Mercy may bless them even as he blessed Jacob."

Kumin remembered this second, younger wife, "…my step-great-grandmother, who lived her last years in the Sinai Home for the Aged in Baltimore and came by train once or twice a year to Philadelphia to stay with us. Most vividly, I remember her recounting her own fondest childhood recollection—that of sitting on her father's shoulders to catch a glimpse of Abraham

Lincoln passing by on parade. The setting was Baltimore. Great-Grandma's story thrilled me. How American it was! How deep my roots! It never occurred to me to fault my opportunistic ancestor for sewing Confederate uniforms."

I asked Kumin about the other poem she sent Lilith, "On Being Asked to Write a Poem for the Centenary of the Civil War."

About the line, "rooted in grateful guilt," she said, "I used to have terrible nightmares that the Nazis were pursuing me. My whole Jewish cohort suffered from the 'grateful guilt'."

"And why did you choose the words 'praying hats' instead of 'yarmulkes'?" I asked.

"'Yarmulkes' wouldn't have fit the line," she said. (Kumin's poetry is renowned for closely patterned sound.) She also reduced the number of her great-grandfather's progeny, she said, from twelve to eight, "because the sound of 'twelve' is almost two syllables." (Kumin's ear is astonishing.)

"And the 'buckle and a candlestick'?" I asked.

"The facts in this poem are unvarnished," Kumin offered, "except for the Confederate Army buckle which I added in the interest of thickening authenticity. The candlestick is a simple brass menorah that my ancestor is reputed to have carried in his pack as he traveled, shank's mare, from Baltimore to Virginia. Much mended, it does appear to be of an honorable antiquity."

"We are how we were raised," she said as we ended our talk. "Friday night was family night, and everyone came for supper and my father read, in English, 'And it was evening and it was morning the sixth day.' It made it clear that the Jewish day started in the evening. I loved that."

S.S.

On Being Asked to Write a Poem for the Centenary of the Civil War

Good friend, from my province what is there to say?
My mother's grandfather left me here
rooted in grateful guilt,
who came, an escaped conscript
blasted out of Europe in 1848;
came, mourned by all his kin
who put on praying hats
and sat a week on footstools there;
plowed forty days by schooner
and sailed in at Baltimore
a Jew, and poor;
strapped needles up and notions
and walked packaback across
the dwindling Alleghenies,
his red beard and nutmeg freckles
dusting as he sang.

There are no abolitionists in my past to point to.
The truth is that this man,
my only link with that event,
prospered in Virginia, begat
eight young and sewed eight years
on shirts to get them bread.
When those warm states stood up to fight,
the war made him a factory
in a pasture lot where he sat,
my part-time pacifist,
stitching uniforms for the Confederates.
The gray cloth made him rich;
they say he lived to lose it all.
I have only a buckle and a candlestick
left over, like old rhetoric,
from his days
to show how little I belong.
This is the way I remember it was told,
but in a hundred years
all stories go wrong.

Maxine Kumin

For My Great-Grandfather: A Message Long Overdue

You with the beard as red as Barbarossa's
uncut from its first sprouting to the hour
they tucked it in your belt and closed your eyes,
you with the bright brass water pipe, a surefire
plaything under the neighbor's children's noses
for you to puff and them to idolize

—the pipe you'd packed up out of somewhere
in Bohemia, along with the praying shawl
and the pair of little leather praying boxes—
Great-Grandfather, old blue-eyed fox of foxes,
I have three pages of you. That is all.

1895. A three-page letter
from Newport News, Virginia, written
on your bleached-out bills of sale, under the stern
heading: ROSENBERG THE TAILOR, DEBTOR,
A FULL LINE OF GOODS OF ALL THE LATEST IN
SUITING AND PANTS. My mother has just been born.

You write to thank your daughter for the picture
of that sixth grandchild. There are six more to come.
"My heart's tenderest tendrils" is your style.
"God bless you even as He blessed Jacob." Meanwhile
you stitch the year away in Christendom.

Meanwhile it seems you've lost your wife, remarried
a girl your daughter's age and caused distress.
"It was a cold relentless hand of Death
that scattered us abroad," you write, "robbing us
of Wife and Mother." Grieving of the one buried
you send new wedding pictures now herewith
and close with mazel and brocha, words that bless.

The second bride lived on in one long study
of pleats and puckers to the age of ninety-two,
smoked cigarettes, crocheted and spoke of you
to keep our kinship threaded up and tidy.

Was that the message—the erratic ways
the little lore that has been handed on
suffers, but sticks it out in the translation?
I tell you to my children, who forget,
are brimful of themselves, and anyway
might have preferred a farmer or a sailor,
but you and I are buttoned, flap to pocket.
Welcome, ancestor, Rosenberg the Tailor!
I choose to be a lifetime in your debt.

Maxine Kumin

USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.

Great Expense, Great Expectations:

Motherhood in the "Lean In" Era

by GABRIELLE BIRKNER

WHEN RONIT SHERWIN MOVED TO DELAWARE in 2011 to become executive director of the University of Delaware Hillel, she decided to enroll her now three-year-old twins in a daycare program at a well-established Jewish organization. But as a single mother and her family's sole breadwinner, she couldn't afford the $2,200 monthly bill for nearly 10 hours a day of childcare for her daughter and son.

"I couldn't buy groceries if I had to pay that," Sherwin, 40, said.

She explained her situation to the daycare provider, and was assured that she would be given time to pay off any outstanding balance. As an in-kind contribution, Sherwin offered to teach a class at the organization housing the daycare.

Each month she wrote a check for what she could afford. But six months in, owing some $6,000, Sherwin received a call from the facility, asking how she planned to resolve her debt. Sherwin, who rents a small house and drives a 13-year-old Honda Civic, explained that she was doing the best she could, and promised to pay off the balance eventually. "I really felt shamed," said Sherwin, who has a master's degree from Harvard, and has worked for Jewish non-profits for the past 17 years.

The plight is not hers alone. For single parents and dual-income families alike, decisions about how to care for one's children during working hours can be fraught with anxiety and second-guesses. And then there's the fact that full-time childcare expenses can be staggering: the cost of infant care today exceeds the median rent in 22 states, and daycare for two children costs more than the median rent in all 50 states.

Sheryl Sandberg has been framing today's conversation on what holds women back at work. The Jewish Facebook executive's bestselling book, *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead*, urges young women to pursue their professional ambitions without worrying that, down the road, they won't be able to balance work and family. The book explores the ways professional women hinder their own career advancement: by downplaying their skills and forgoing challenging assignments even before they have their first child.

Young Jewish women—many raised by Second Wave feminist mothers, and disproportionately represented at elite colleges—are particularly well positioned to lean in to demanding careers. These positions often require long hours and round-the-clock connectivity. For those professionals who also choose to become parents, keeping pace at work often requires non-parental childcare, and lots of it.

Sandberg acknowledges the high cost of childcare among the hurdles to getting ahead. But she encourages professional women "to measure the cost of child care against their future salary, rather than their current salary." The flaw here is that you can't pay your current bills with your future earnings. In some families, like Sherwin's, the cost of childcare outstrips a parent's ability to pay. (Sherwin was able to settle her daycare debt, thanks to a salary increase and an anonymous donation. It's a happy ending, but hardly a scalable solution.) In two-income families the expense often exceeds the take-home pay of one parent, making "opting out" a decision driven by finances rather than by a desire to leave the workforce.

In generations past, many Jewish working parents could rely on their own mothers to help look after the children. But

today, those grandmothers, however doting, are more likely to be contending with their own demanding jobs, living beyond easy commuting distance, and possibly delaying retirement because of their own economic concerns.

Without nearby family to help, Joanna Smith Rakoff, the author of the 2009 novel *A Fortunate Age*, has struggled with finding and funding daycare for her two children, now 8 and 4. Smith Rakoff, 41, was dissatisfied with the Jewish early childcare options on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where she lives. Many cost much more than she and her husband, an editor at a literary non-profit, could afford. Yet they didn't qualify for government-subsidized daycare programs run by Jewish organizations; those primarily serve low income youngsters who are not Jewish.

Because the family was able to afford only very part-time childcare, the timeline for Rakoff's forthcoming book—a memoir about the year she spent working for the famously reclusive writer J.D. Salinger—"was magnificently derailed," taking some eight months longer than expected. "Had we been able to afford childcare, we'd be in a much better financial situation," Rakoff, the family's primary breadwinner, said. "My ability to produce is greatly decreased by the constraints on my time."

For Smith Rakoff, "leaning in" while also tending to the needs of two young children means waking up at 5 A.M. every day, even on the weekends, trying to work at the playground after school, and always feeling "exhausted and behind," she said.

DESPITE THE COLLECTIVE HAND-WRINGING OVER THE COSTS OF Jewish life—see Elizabeth Mandel's sidebar on the complicated calculus she does and sacrifices she makes to send her children to day school—there has been less attention paid to the availability and affordability of Jewish daycare for children too young for school.

The good news is that in and beyond the Jewish community, changes are afoot. For the first time in decades, the issue of childcare is permeating the national conversation, and inspiring ambitious proposals from the White House on down.

You can't pay your current bills with your future earnings.

The Jewish Costs of Jewish Education

by ELIZABETH MANDEL

My husband and I long ago decided that a Jewish day school education was a top priority for us. I attended Jewish day school from pre-school through high school, and that daily immersion in Jewish texts and a Jewish environment continues to enrich me spiritually and intellectually. My husband attended Hebrew school through his bar mitzvah. He found it stultifying, and he learned little. While he has spent time during his adult life studying, he feels like he can, in his own words, "never catch up," the way a language learner who begins study in adulthood might feel impossibly behind next to someone who has been speaking a language since the age of three. He envies me the knowledge I wear like a second skin.

And so, we decided we wanted our children to attend Jewish day school to have the opportunity to delve into the Jewish texts, rich in their nuance and complexity; to be immersed in Jewish traditions, from the laws and rituals to the songs and symbols, surrounded by a love for Israel, steeped in the importance of giving and contributing to society. We wanted them to spend their days as part of the Jewish community. We found a school that reflected our world views, combining a liberal, progressive pedagogy with deep learning and a commitment to religious egalitarianism.

But then we had our third child, and we became engulfed with worry about how we were going to afford tuition for all three girls. My husband and I began to examine the changes that we could make in our lives in order to be able to afford astronomical tuition costs. We already live fairly modest lives, and we knew that the change would have to be something significant, beyond cutting out the occasional dinner delivery. There were only two real places we could make such a change. We could move to the suburbs, where both living costs and tuitions would be less expensive, or I could stop freelancing as a documentary film producer, writer and editor, and go back to work full time. Since the birth of my first child I had first worked part time and then moved to freelancing, with an extremely flexible schedule. This enabled me to spend days at home with my children, go on class trips and to doctor appointments, to be with them if they were sick, to be home when the babysitter was sick. It enriched our family life and our individual lives in many ways—but not financially.

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What have we given up in order to give our children a Jewish education?

After much soul-searching, we decided that leaving Manhattan was not the right solution for our family. Among other things, the commute would mean too many hours where we were neither with our children nor working. And so, when my baby was four and a half months old, I went back to work full time. In addition, I moved from a career in the non-profit arts sector, with a focus on social justice, into the private sector. (I want to acknowledge that I was extremely fortunate, in this economy, to find a job at all, and to find a job that I greatly enjoy. I am deeply grateful for the five years of flexibility I did have.)

Now, six months later, I am stepping back to see what we have given up in order to give our children a Jewish education. Here is my shortlist: an extended maternity leave with my new baby, significant time at home with my older kids, a deep involvement with their schools, my almost-guaranteed presence at every play, trip and pre-Shabbat sing-along, Fridays home to prepare Shabbat meals and to host company, modeling a creative professional life devoted to social justice, money for trips to Israel, Jewish summer camp, college, retirement, the ability to give the kind of *tzedakah* we would like to give. (To the last item, it dawned on me recently that as a recipient of some day school financial aid, I am a recipient of tzedakah; I question whether this is a good use of our community's limited resources in the face of those with far more urgent needs.)

I am left confronting a great irony. Has organizing our lives around affording day school tuition, so our children can learn Jewish values, turned out to be antithetical to propagating and modeling Jewish values?

Our choices are also possibly having other, less tangible repercussions. Like so many of my peers I have, since becoming a mother, struggled with the dilemma of working *vs.* parenting. For me, this broader struggle has included trying to figure out what kind of female role model, Jewish female role model, I want to be for my three daughters. What will they learn from how I balance my professional, financial, religious and parenting priorities? How will my choices affect the way they see themselves and their expected roles in society, the workplace, the Jewish community, their own future families? What will my choices—first in following my passions, now in prioritizing paying for day school—mean for them when they make their own career decisions?

Is day school worth it? Or would my children be better served, and have a greater—or more significant—exposure to Jewish values by having me around more frequently and watching me do the work I once did, not to mention having time to spend with a far less stressed-out version of me? Would choosing public school, in this way, actually enrich my children's lives, both Jewishly and otherwise? What are the *Jewish* costs of a Jewish education?

In the Jewish community, the pressing need for daycare has synagogues and community centers upending longstanding preschool models and rethinking their strategies for engaging young families. Alas, funders have been slower to get (and stay) onboard. Some of the largest foundations funding Jewish education have devoted only a small fraction of their resources to early childhood, a recent Jewish Week article noted. Meanwhile, the Steinhardt Foundation-funded Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative shuttered last year. One philanthropy stepping up is the UJA-Federation of New York, which is exploring ways to expand the number of Jewish daycare facilities in its catchment area—as well as how to ease the financial burden of this childcare.

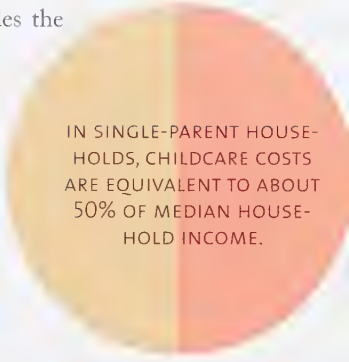
Forty years ago, legislation that would have created a national network of daycares, with a sliding-scale fee structure, sailed through the U.S. Senate—only to be stopped with a presidential veto. President Nixon, bowing to Cold War politics and pressure from the rising religious right, said that he couldn't sign off on a bill that backed "communal approaches to child-rearing" over a "family-centered approach." In the decades since, childcare has been mostly absent from the federal legislative agenda. (A block grant funding daycare subsidies for low-income families and a relatively small childcare tax credit have provided only a little relief.)

President Obama revived the issue in his 2013 State of the Union address, in which he called for a larger government investment in early childhood. Among his policy proposals: universal pre-K, the expansion of early intervention services, and additional investments in Early Head Start, which provides daycare services for infants and toddlers. Were his proposals to become law, childcare centers —including many run by Jewish organizations—could see an influx of government funding. But the President's pitch comes at a time when there is immense pressure to cut federal spending. The automatic, across-the-board budget cuts brought on by this year's sequester threatened to cost as many as 70,000 low-income children their Head Start placements.

"Whether out of reluctance to acknowledge a fundamental change in the conception of parenthood—especially motherhood—or out of a fear of expanding the role of government in family life, we still haven't come to terms with the shift of women from the home to the workplace," wrote Jonathan Cohn, in his recent New Republic cover story "The Hell of American Daycare."

As a result, Jewish families with children from infants to preteens are faced with Solomonic choices at every turn. To leave a more expensive urban setting for suburbs where childcare is cheaper, when the commute means longer stretches away from home? Scale back at work to spend more time with the children and to save on childcare, when it means less pay, prestige and opportunities for promotion? Hire a nanny who will come in even when the kids are sick, and pay her "off the books"? Or shell out more money to pay her "on the books," and put her at risk of losing the government medical benefits she relies on? View the high cost of childcare as an investment in future earnings, and go into debt right now? Opt for a partial-day Jewish program and cobble together afternoon care, or choose a non-Jewish program that provides the needed coverage?

Now, synagogue nursery schools are morphing into "early learning" centers with full-day care.



THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS SUDDENLY TAKING THESE decisions seriously, whether out of enlightened self-interest or out of a genuine desire to nurture the next generation of Jews. Whatever the motivation, it's good news for working families who want Jewish experiences for their children, but are unable to drop them off at 9 a.m. and pick them up at noon.

"We've asked, 'What do you need from us?'" said Mark Horowitz, vice president for early childhood education at the JCC Association (JCCA). "It's moved from just wanting a place to get to know other moms or to hear speakers talk about toilet-training or sleep problems to 'We really need fulltime care'." To that end, the number of their affiliated community centers offering full-day care has risen dramatically in the past five years to about two-thirds of its 157 "early-learning" centers. (Horowitz avoids the term "daycare.")

Similarly, the ubiquitous synagogue nursery schools are starting to morph into "early learning" centers offering full-day care. The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) is encouraging more of its 900 North American synagogues to reevaluate their existing preschool programs. The organization has designed an 18-month course for synagogues looking to develop a more "comprehensive approach to early childhood education," and another for those exploring ways to engage more young families in synagogue life. Both look at how providing full-day care for children may fit into that equation—despite the daunting financial planning, real estate retrofitting and state licensing that may be involved.

Congregational preschools have long provided a gateway to synagogue involvement. But preschool enrollment declined

during this last economic downturn, when many parents had to return to work and were looking for full-day care. Reform movement leaders worried about a ripple effect. "It's not just about early childcare," said Cathy Rolland, URJ's director of early childhood education and young family engagement. "It's about the synagogue's focus on the next generation, and realizing that we need these synagogues to be filled up with these young families."

Out of this need, two Reform synagogues, Temple Israel of New Rochelle in Westchester County, N.Y., and Sherith Israel in San Francisco, are embracing a novel idea: they've joined forces with Bright Horizons, a for-profit daycare chain, to develop full-day programs. The URJ and the UJA-Federation of New York have also had initial talks with Bright Horizons about bringing daycare centers to other Jewish institutions.

Temple Israel's program, Kehillah, opened in 2011 with a $2 million investment from the synagogue. So far, the program, which accepts infants as young as six weeks, has served 85 children. Tuition ranges from $830 to more than $2,100 a month per child, depending on the amount of care needed. A free synagogue membership is part of the deal.

"When [my husband and I] bought the house, we knew finding childcare would be the most important thing," said Amy Klein, 37, who enrolled her two young daughters in Kehillah when the family moved to Scarsdale, N.Y., last year. "Finding a temple was lower down on the list. It was nice that we could have it all together, and become part of the community. We've become friendly with a lot of the other young families."

Temple Israel is banking on Kehillah families forming close ties within the congregation. "When we decided to do infant care," Nancy Bossov, Kehillah's director, told The New York Jewish Week, "it was with the understanding that if we wait until the child is two years old, the parents already have their friends and family patterns down—and temple won't be a part of it."

PER-CHILD INFANT CARE COSTS ARE MORE THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR A MARRIED COUPLE.

"If you wait until the child is two years old, you'll lose the family."

Another Reform institution, The Temple–Tifereth Israel's Ganon Gil preschool in Beachwood, Ohio, transitioned to a full-day infant and toddler program earlier this year. The move followed an 18-month study of the congregation's efforts to engage young families. It "opened our eyes to the fact that we were not meeting the needs of everyone, with families going back to work earlier than they [once] were," the school's director, Lori Kowit, said.

A $50,000 grant from the Cleveland Foundation helped cover the cost of retrofitting classrooms, purchasing equipment, bringing on additional staff and marketing the program. State funding has allowed Ganon Gil to provide tuition assistance to qualifying families of children ages 3–5; families making up to 400% of federal poverty—up to $94,200 a year for a family of four—receive a 33% discount.

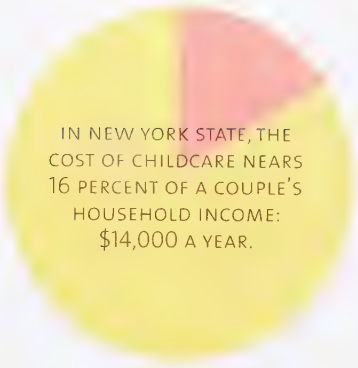
Not unexpectedly, expanding its early childhood offerings has been a boon for Ganon Gil. In September, the partial-day preschool opened with just 27 students—35 under capacity. "We could not possibly accommodate to that [half-day] schedule," said Megan Reich, a Cleveland-based museum curator, who enrolled her two toddlers at Ganon Gil as soon as the full-day option became available. Since extending its hours and opening the program to infants in early 2013, enrollment has jumped to 48 youngsters (as of press time), and Ganon Gil is operating in the black, Kowit said.

But daycare can be longer-term investment for a synagogue, said Maxine Handelman, an early childhood education consultant at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. "Some people think it's going to be a big moneymaker, when it will likely cost the synagogue," given the high caregiver-to-child ratio most states mandate for infant care, she said.

Like their Reform movement counterparts, scores of Conservative-affiliated congregational schools have extended their hours since the recession's onset. The transition to full-day care often challenges a preschool's longstanding teaching culture, said Handelman. "Sometimes there's resistance from the director on down," she said. "They may say, 'I signed up to run a nine-to-two school, and I'm not so sure that I want to work till 6 o'clock every night'."

In addition, schools may have to alter their expectations of parental participation during the school day. They may see an influx of non-Jewish students whose parents are drawn to the hours, not to the religious environment. And among institutions that hew closer to *halakha*, daycare hours and staffing on Jewish holidays, and as Shabbat approaches on Fridays, can be challenging.

What about Jewish daycare as a birthright, like Birthright Israel?



"I wrestle with it," Judith Rose of Miami's Bet Breira School wrote, on a USCJ listserv, of the early childhood center's decision to stay open Fridays until 6 P.M. "Realistically if I closed [at] four each Friday during the winter months, I would lose the majority of the families who depend on aftercare. We use the staff willing to work these hours, even though it is Shabbat. Some are Jewish, some are not."

Chabad-Lubavitch, which also reports a major expansion into full-day childcare, noted that while most such programs end early on Fridays, some allow for a seamless transition from daycare to youth Shabbat programming after sundown.

THE NEW PUSH FOR FULL-DAY CHILDCARE UNDER JEWISH organizational roofs provides the necessary structure. But what about the means to pay for all these hours? Think back to the dilemma faced by parents like Ronit Sherwin and Joanna Smith Rakoff.

Four decades after Nixon's veto of the daycare bill, per-child infant care costs are more than 10 percent of the median household income for a married couple in most states, according to a recent report from Child Care Aware of America; in New York State, where childcare costs are some of the highest, that number nears 16 percent, some $14,000 a year. In single-parent households, the expense can be even more onerous, equivalent to about 50% of median household income in many states. Full-time toddler care is only slightly less expensive.

It's *de rigueur* in some areas to pay more than double that $14,000 average for a full-time nanny. Add to that Social Security and Medicare taxes, workers' compensation and disability insurance, and health insurance—because at $30,000 a year, the nanny is unlikely to qualify for Medicaid—the cost goes way up. Many families who want to do right by their nannies—and who remember the trouble that paying help "off the books" caused for politically ambitious women (see Zoë Baird and Nancy Killefer)—say they just can't afford to do everything aboveboard. "From the employer's perspective, it is more difficult and costly, and from the employee's side of things, it can mean losing really important benefits" from the government, said a Brooklyn, N.Y. mother of two who pays her nanny "off the books."

For now, when it comes to childcare, most of the Jewish communal efforts are focused on daycare (though Jews for Racial & Economic Justice has pushed to improve working conditions for nannies and other domestic workers). "There's a real need for funders to step up to the plate," said the JCCA's Mark Horowitz, noting that scholarship options that do exist are often insufficient.

One potential funder is UJA-Federation of New York, now scouting New York-area synagogues and community centers primed for an expansion into daycare.

"Knowing that this is a big issue all families are grappling with—how to work, to make a living, and to do all the important things families need to do, we're beginning to explore the idea of Jewish daycare," said Melanie Schneider, senior planning executive for UJA-Federation's Commission on Jewish Identity & Renewal.

Once identified, the Federation will help fund feasibility studies, and provide support should they decide to move forward, Schneider said. On the affordability front, the philanthropy is hoping to pilot "family daycare" programs. These home-based centers—often run by mothers with young children of their own—are generally less expensive than larger, institutional ones. UJA-Federation sees an opportunity to help these caregivers infuse their offerings with Jewish content. The Federation may also look to standardize sliding-scale tuition models.

Meanwhile, Jonah Pesner, senior vice president and second-in-command at URJ, is floating the idea of Jewish daycare as a birthright, along the lines of Birthright Israel, the popular program that sends young adults on free 10-day trips to Israel. "People are telling us, in city after city: We need help with childcare," Pesner said.

DAYCARE PROGRAMS AND TUITION SUBSIDIES ARE ARGUABLY as good an investment as trips to Israel. And there are fewer unknowns. Jewish children are already in the picture. Their parents need quality childcare, and help paying for it. Synagogues and community centers need to engage young families—families that look and work a whole lot different than they did a generation ago. That means overhauling existing programming models, like preschools that start at age two, and assumptions, like that one parent is always available for a noon pickup and a $2,200 a month childcare bill poses no hardship.

Leaning in necessitates not only a "will to lead," but also a structure that supports women's ambitions. Access to quality, affordable childcare is key. The extent to which Jewish institutions adapt to that reality seems linked, inextricably, to their ability to fill sanctuaries, schools, seminaries and synagogue boards. Linked, inextricably, to their own destiny.

GABRIELLE BIRKNER *is a writer and editor living in New York.*

Charlotte A. Newberger Poetry Prize

Lilith's editors are delighted to announce that there are three winners of this year's Poetry Prize. The judge for the 2013 contest was Alicia Ostriker, herself the author of 12 books of poetry. She selected entries by Karen Mandell, Julie Sugar and Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach, and adds her own comments after each of the winning poems.

This prize at Lilith is named in honor of Charlotte Newberger's longstanding support for the publication of poetry in Lilith. For more information, including guidelines for submission, please visit Lilith.org.

The other winning poems appear on pages 30 and 39.

Rose Has a New Walker

We buy it online. She got her old one,
standard issue gray aluminum, at the hospital
after she fell at Susie's house last summer.
It's a man's walker, and she holds her elbows out like bent wings
when she grasps the handles. It's too wide for her.
I toss out the question one day, if you had a new walker
what color would you choose.
Blue, she says, just like that. I order blue.
When it comes, we connect the hand brakes,
attach the basket and the seat,
pull the plastic wrap off the wheels.
Can I return it, Rose says.
Absolutely not, I tell her. It's from the Internet.
She feels better knowing there's no choice.
But it's always good to try again.
Maybe I won't need it. I ride the exercise bike now.
And in Chi Gong class I stand up longer.
Before I did the exercises from the chair.
Anyway, it's not blue. I think it's black.
So for that we'll return it? It's navy.
Under the lamp we compromise on navy black.
I tell her to try the seat. But always remember
to press the hand brakes when you sit down.
It's like the brakes on a bike.
She doesn't get it. She never rode a bike, she says,
she roller skated everywhere, to the botanical conservatory,
to the library. She tightened the skates with a key she wore
around her neck. When they broke, and that was often,
her father would fix them, *a tragedy you kids never met him.*
I ask Rose to push the walker in the hall.
She can't help smiling; stately, royal she glides like the King's barge
down the Thames. The waters part before her; I hear Handel's music.
It's nice, she says. *But what should I do with the old one. A shame to waste it.*
It'll be a spare, I say. Maybe we'll take it in the car when we go out.
Remember when Daddy taught me how to ride, I say. Running beside me,
his hand on the fender and then letting go.
Of course I remember, she says, *he taught all of you.*
And then I was free to pedal around the block, up to the drug store,
turn right, turn right again, over and over, centrifugally
pulled by the gravity of home.

Karen Mandell

A poem with a pitch-perfect ear for the tones and rhythms of dialogue, and a pitch-perfect heart for the art of preserving a feisty elder's dignity—with a deft surprise ending. Three generations of caring, tactful family love and humor are captured here, and "the gravity of home" is the poem's perfect close. — **ALICIA OSTRIKER**

2013 Fiction Prize Winner

IRONING

by SARAH SELTZER

Esther watched Tennis Boy amble across the hotel lobby, racket slung across his back, and decided on the spot he'd be her first boyfriend. He wasn't noticeably handsome, but he was noticeably normal, and to Esther's twelve-year-old eyes, that was everything.

The mirrors on the wall created four of him, no, six, each more polished than the last. Esther's own family needed no multiplying, boisterous and too many already; they monopolized the desk as they checked in for their reunion in Puerto Rico, her uncle passing out room keys like prizes.

Given that Tennis Boy would be gallivanting past at regular intervals, he was an obvious choice. He would fall for Esther's wholesome looks, a contrast to the gussied-up falseness of his friends back home. He and she would dive beneath the same surging wave. Impressed by her courage when she rose in the surf's wake, he'd compliment her. Then as the sun sent light skittering across the turquoise waters, he'd kiss her. She would soon be transported by a momentous passion, leaving behind her squabbling clan, the impending double doom of braces and bat mitzvah, the fact that her best friend Lin had a date to the winter formal, and the terror that underlay it all: a sense that each day since seventh grade began had colluded with the day before it to shove Esther into a shackled crouch, to render her one day less free.

Unfortunately for Esther's plans, the hotel's private beach was lake-like: no waves. Even worse, the air above it was what the girls at school called "bad hair day humid." Though she'd ignored her cousins' request to build a sand fort so she might recline beneath the umbrella and alternate reading a Star Trek novelization with conjuring Tennis Boy's lips brushing hers, her curls still bloated.

Her cousins gave her a new nickname, after the expanding animals on TV infomercials, those hideously mushrooming balls of greenery. "You know what Estie looks like? A Chia pet!"

They sat at dinner at the resort's mediocre Italian restaurant, all in polo shirts. She'd already slathered in gobs of her brother's gel, so much that her scalp itched. But "LA Style 100 Extra Hold" had failed.

"Ch-ch-chia pet!" Her brother's shoulders churned up and down with mirth, like engine parts. The adults gulped their amusement back, their throats constricting. Esther's mother, whose hair was cut close to her skull, ran a hand through the girl's massy locks, but was halted by thick, gel-caked snarls.

"Like me," she said softly.

"Like *your whole* family!" Her aunts, not Jewish, denied involvement in the travesty. "Esther honey, don't butter the bread. You're not getting taller."

"Well, she's certainly sprouting," said her uncle, and everyone tittered because Esther was a noticeable B-cup, which was something for a twelve-year-old, *not that it sent the boys running in her direction yet*, she had heard her father telling her aunt on the tarmac this morning, adding: *Thank God.*

Esther who had been attempting to be a good sport at dinner, wondered suddenly what kept the boys from running. Did she want them to run? She squeezed a spongy curl, felt it rebound, and fantasized about impaling her family with a butter knife, then stabbing herself in the heart.

Tennis Boy and his family emerged from a corner table. Esther thrust her shoulders back and offered him a bold natural gaze, which he neither noticed nor returned. Yet he beckoned her into a better daydream; her T-shirt morphed into an evening dress, her hair softened and spread like wings and together they danced until dawn to Caribbean drums. She buttered her bread and floated away.

Esther's best friend Lin had met a boy on vacation in Mexico and gotten to second base, a relief because what else did you even *need* before high school? Esther could achieve this too, she knew, if she applied herself, sat still, laughed at the right times and didn't say anything dumb about Star Trek.

The next morning Esther swam with her cousins at a more distant beach with waves, though she knew the salty water would not help her hair situation. She joined them building a new fort soon smashed and flattened by the surf.

"You're way more fun today," she was told. She snorted and splashed; somehow she had the idea that while she bobbed, Tennis Boy might be gazing at them, wondering who these people were, these people who acted so carefree.

Through the window of the cab home, she noticed a Walgreen's. A hair iron waited in those aisles; the girls at school, if in her predicament, would buy it. Surely Esther's mom would never approve the idea: "What a waste," she'd say. "We're in a beautiful place and you want to go to a drugstore?" Yet the iron floated before Esther's eyes, a sacred object.

Later, Esther's brother and cousins embarked on video game tournament. Esther sat alone, picturing Tennis Boy coming to visit her on her block at home, a red rose in his hands, and Lin's jaw dropping at the idea that a boy *like that* would go for *Esther.* In the vision, her hair was straight. Ironed straight.

She opened her eyes to the sunlight and there stood the real thing, with his racket, talking to her cousins at the entrance to the arcade. His shirt was off; his shorts slung below his waist revealed a trapezoid of fine-cut muscles. Esther draped a towel around herself, covering his indecency by proxy, and sauntered towards them, hearing phrases like "high score" and "next level."

"Hey Estie," the youngest cousin called.

"Hey, Chia Pet! Ch-ch-chia!" the cousin added as Esther struggled to formulate a socially acceptable way of saying hi back.

"Chia?" Tennis Boy said. He looked right at her and laughed like it was the best joke he'd ever heard. He quaked with it as her brother had, each peal a knife entering between her ribs and perforating her heart.

They began to talk about a tennis tournament but Esther couldn't pretend to care: she fled into the bathroom to weep pitifully into her resort-issue towel. What a loser she saw in the mirror there, too preoccupied with the rooms of her mind to tackle the halo of frizz that crowned them. She craved a friend, a girl to hand her tissues or coo. Instead, the shrieks of children on the waterslide battered her ears.

A thumping drumbeat began in her chest and spread down to her stomach. She had to act. Esther dashed upstairs to the room she shared with her brother, shivering from the hotel's air conditioning. Ignoring the wet stains spreading over her T-shirt from her thick hair, she pulled on the handle of the adjoining room and saw her mother asleep, her head framed by a pure white pillow.

Esther had never lied or stolen a thing. And her mother was so peaceful, so tired, as if the family's teasing, the tugging, had caused her to retreat just as it forced Esther to venture out.

Esther pushed back her pity: the moment demanded something harder. She grimaced, reached into her mom's purse and pulled out a wad of cash. Before she could reconsider her descent into petty thievery, she exited: out through the lobby with the slot machines blinking and bleeping and the sad old people throwing their money away, as her family described it.

She stood still on the sultry street. On their tour of the Fort the first day here, they had learned about how horribly the Europeans, then the Americans, had treated the island. Oppression, poverty, just like the creepy Borg on Star Trek, traveling to different planets, assimilating people into slavery. Her family was like the Borg too sometimes: her father had gripped her shoulder on the way back and said, "Stay close to the Hilton, Estie." She had said, "I ride the bus into Boston all the time."

"Hey you. Hey Chia!" She looked up and saw Tennis Boy, lounging in front of the hotel with a drink in his hand. "Tennis later? Your cousins are coming. Ask them for deets. What's your name again?"

"Esther," she squeaked out.

"Okay cutie," he said. "Bring your racket."

She nodded and watched him glide away, "cutie" reverberating in the air. A window had opened with that word; a real one, not imaginary. She might puke with excitement. She had to see this mission through.

She walked towards Condado. Her thighs rubbed together and her shorts rode up inside them, about a centimeter. Her aunt said she wasn't growing taller. True, a small puddle of belly now spilled out over her bikini shorts. She should do sit-ups. Yes: she had to iron herself out from top to bottom. Sweat gathered behind her neck and beneath her breasts.

She stopped halfway across the causeway for a breath. The tide flowed beneath her feet from the wild Atlantic into the lagoon. Her hotel looked like a dollhouse. She felt dizzy but kept on down an avenue lined with shops whose windows held the little frogs, dolls and seashells that her family called *tchotchkes*, always in a singsong voice—chach-kees!

She passed two homeless men asleep on the sidewalk, one cop with a machine gun, dozens of tourists and six elderly people awaiting the bus. Where did the bus take them, and wouldn't it be nice to just sit on it until the end of the line? Esther imagined the ride, the bumpy road, the sea views, the small houses growing smaller and smaller as they left San Juan's center behind. Perhaps there was a perfect pink house for her and Tennis Boy, with laundry in the yard and some chickens.

Next to the bus stop she saw a group of teenagers, American boys. They reminded her of her cousins, but older. Like Tennis Boy, too. Their laughter was harsh; they barely saw her pass.

Esther hurried towards Walgreen's and shoved the door open, standing still in an oasis of air conditioning and discount beauty products.

"You get them!" "No, you do!" a pair of teenagers giggled in the condom aisle.

Esther hid her face, sidestepped them on the way to the hair section. She had enough cash to buy the iron and for added kicks the cheapest eyeshadow, mascara and lipstick she could find.

At the register the woman gave her everything in a plastic bag.

"*Gracias*," Esther blurted out.

"That iron works good on curls," the cashier said in approval—or was it disapproval?

Tremors traveled through Esther's limbs: what if her mom woke up and missed her? But she was bursting with the need of it, to use her new purchases, to rip open the plastic and erase her face, tame her tangles. She slipped into the lobby of the Condado Plaza hotel and followed the signs to the ladies lounge.

She was bursting with the need of it, to rip open the plastic and erase her face, tame her tangles.

Once there, she savagely attacked the box with the iron in it, unsheathed it and plugged it in. While it began to heat up, she fell upon the makeup, hurling the pieces of packaging in the trash. She stood at the mirror: shadow, stroke, fill. She didn't know what she was doing but she was doing *something:* dab, line, stroke. Her eyes became encircled by big dark patches.

The iron radiated heat. Esther inhaled, then ran it down each curl, pressing it against the strands, stopping when she felt the singe, the crackle on the ends of her hair.

Oh, the sick smell of it. She had a friend who cut herself. Another friend who had stopped eating anything but balled up

"GIRLS" BY MYRANDA HARNAGE, DESIGNSBYMYRANDA.COM

pieces of white bread. Esther kept going: lock by lock, kink by kink, she conquered the flyaways until a woman who reminded her of her mother barged in.

"Ugh! It smells like burning! Why are you doing this down here, honey?"

"My mom's sleeping." No lie. Still, she ought to return. Tonight they were going to Old San Juan for dinner.

"Giving yourself a makeover?" the lady asked

"Sort of."

"You're gorgeous. Don't change—you're too young." The woman went into a stall.

Shut up old woman, Esther wanted to say. Usually, she never even *thought* things like that. The woman began to pee. Esther looked at herself in the mirror and she couldn't help it; she grinned. She had done it; she was beautiful.

Esther held her head up high on the way home and let her hips sway, slightly, like Lin's did. She smiled to herself. *She had done it.* She noticed the American boys in college sweatshirts and backwards caps on the sidewalk, milling, and stared at them: frank, natural, bold.

This time they noticed her too.

"Yo. What're you looking at?" one asked. She froze.

They swarmed, like the bench spilling over after a school basketball game. They were fourteen or older; it couldn't be *her* they were lurching towards. She instinctively crossed her arms across her chest, looked down, walked on.

"Why is she not answering?" she heard. "Raccoon eyes."

"You were checking us OUT, girl. J, she likes you."

"Her tits are big!"

"Where's she going? So rude!"

"Hey chica!" They were tourists like her. Maybe they even went to her school, and she'd have to see them in January. Esther walked faster, engulfed by blasts of hot shame. Why had she looked their way? Why had she been excited when they looked back? Her face perspired; her eye makeup was running down the sides of her nose.

"Why won't you talk to us?"

"Ugh, fuck her!"

"Would you, though?"

"I'd hit it."

She lost them on the causeway, hearing over the din her raggedy breath. "Leave me alone!" she told the air.

Evening was arriving on the lagoon; she watched the white scrim of the waves hit the breakers. Salt settled on her tongue; air moved across her damp neck.

Esther lifted up her hand, weakly, and spent her last five dollars on a cab that took her 800 feet.

She looked at her selves, all eight of them, in the mirrors of her hotel lobby. Gone was the frizzy hair, yes, but she saw now that the effect looked off, as if her head were straining against a leash. The tendrils near her face remained fuzzy: sweat.

Yes, her eyes looked like a raccoon's, her lips lurid, a cheap imitation of Lin or the girls at school. A *tchotchke.*

Tennis Boy, dressed in black shiny fabric, blocked her way to the elevator.

"I kicked your cousin's ass in tennis," he said cheerfully. "Your mascara's running," he added, as if it were obvious that she would wear mascara. She put a hand to her face. "Well see ya, Chia! Hey, that rhymes," he said, finding her mute.

Esther slid down the side of the elevator and sat on the floor as it climbed. She was Chia Pet, yes, but he wasn't Tennis Boy. He was Andrew, Josh, Evan or Jake. Of course he had a girlfriend; boys like that just did. She saw Tennis Boy raising his racket and sending an ace over the net, leaving her relatives speechless.

Her mother paced the hallway, growing frantic. She pulled Esther by her arm and then wrapped her in a smothering hug—an act which led Esther to spill the details of her subterfuge and a few more tears.

In the taxi to dinner Esther learned *there would be consequences for her actions.* She heard the words "chores" and "grounded." But her mom wished it were easier, she did. She believed she had raised Esther to be herself, not underhanded. Esther, wretched, wished her mom would hug her again or go back to sleep.

The trees in the old city's plazas were festooned with lights that slid up and down like drops of illuminated water. Kids set off firecrackers and pigeons swooped, then hobbled around eating the clusters of crumbs.

"Whoa, you look different," said Esther's brother. "I miss your Jewfro."

"She looks good," said the older cousin.

"I see you're putting more into your appearance," her aunt whispered. "It's about time. Easier on the eye makeup, easier on the dessert."

"Your aunt has a problem," said her mother. "Don't listen, Estie."

Tunes engulfed the plaza, but Esther heard only the replay of the day: the rough talk of the boys, laughter from her would-be lover, her aunt's fretting.

Esther sought refuge in her mind, but imagined only the high balcony of her room and herself climbing the railing. She felt herself overtaken by a wave. She dodged a car swerving towards her on the causeway.

She sensed in a thousand ways her visibility, her invisibility. Maybe she even sensed a future of being overlooked, leered at, always wanting: objects packaged as salvation that never were, promised approval that never came.

The trees rained light. Somewhere close by, waves swept in against the rocks, the soft sand. Her cousins tossed a tennis ball in a circle. The moist breeze with its fingers began lifting each tendril of her hair and lacing it in a spiral, undoing her work.

Her journey to Walgreen's felt filthy: a betrayal, a waste. But she felt she'd have to make it again, to flatten and press things down until they burned at the edges. How endless, how exhausting this would be, like the tide coming in each morning for years, wearing down the sandcastles the children built.

Esther squeezed her eyelids shut, then opened them. But wait—what if there was still a chance? She craned her neck, strained to get a glimpse of Tennis Boy walking the street towards her, hoping still for a rescuer, for a story that wasn't hers.

SARAH MARIAN SELTZER *is a journalist, essayist and fiction writer. Her work has appeared in Ms., the Washington Post, the Hairpin and the Forward. Tweeting as @sarahmseltzer. www.sarahmseltzer.com*

FLESH & BLOOD

MY FATHER'S MEAT GRINDER

by PENNY WOLFSON

I wish I had the wooden slat-board, impregnated with blood and salt, that my mother used for kashering meat. Instead, it's the grinder that remains, a secondary object—it even says #2—made of cast iron, impervious, resistant; my father's, not my mother's, object, since he ground the meat. That's how I remember it, anyway, him still standing in his overcoat prickly with the cold, forcing the chuck into the open cup of the grinder with a short wooden dowel; the crank first resisting, then, with a push and a jerk of the arm, giving way. And the pink spirals of meat working their way out of the shuttlecock exit, its protruding screw like a steel nipple.

Are objects like their users? For the grinder is heavy, complex, like my father, with its gears and coils; the screws that affix to a table or countertop, that lovely butterfly-like widget. Not like my mother: salt, blood. Primary.

There are scars in the surface of the grinder, now that I look, small dark chips in the silver patina bespeaking years of use, imperfection. And the handle, made of light weathered wood in the shape of a candle flame—surely the handle must still bear the imprint of my father's beautiful fingers. The grinder says UNIVERSAL, but growing up, I didn't know anyone else who had one. Or had meat that spilled blood, like my mother's did, in the middle of the night, slabs of veined beef and lamb, layered with fat, heavily sprinkled with coarse salt, draining from a wooden board into the double-bowled sink, down through the pipes into the bowels of our suburban house.

Meat seemed an intimate thing, and the way your family dealt with it was no one else's business. In the early- to mid-sixties, when I grew up, it was like sex, or your parents' divorce, or the child our neighbors had placed in an institution: unmentionable. We were kosher, yet I don't remember ever confiding to anyone that there was blood in our kitchen at night. Nor did I mention the fat fingers of flesh that forced their way through the guts of the grinder, or the livers my mother placed in a two-handled grill that she held over the gas burner till it turned black and glowed. These were rituals that siphoned off the final life-blood, the flicker of the spirit that still remained.

Perhaps the intimacy came from shame about eating meat at all; in the Garden of Eden, it is said, man and woman were vegetarian. To me, blood seemed a guilty secret.

My mother was the one who did the kashering, but meat was my father's heritage. In the Old Country, in Kamianets-Podolsk,

PHOTOS BY JEREMIAH DINE

Ukraine, in the Pale of Settlement, my grandfather Naftali was a kosher butcher, trained in a strange and technical art.

For example, Jews are forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve. Why? Because Jacob, in the Bible, wrestled with an angel one night before meeting up with his brother Esau, from whom he'd stolen their father's birthright. The angel (both literal being and conscience) wounds Jacob in the thigh…which leads, centuries later, to an addendum to the laws of kashrut. Not only must an animal be slaughtered humanely and quickly, with a knife to the throat, not only must the meat be salted and drained of blood before being eaten, but the sciatic nerve must be excised to commemorate Jacob's wound, and only someone exceedingly skilled knows how to do this.

Because of his central role in ritual, the *shochet* was an important figure in the Jewish community. In small communities in Europe, the rabbi and shochet were often the same person, a person not only well-trained in Jewish law, but also pious. And, of course, the shochet had to be a man.

It made sense that in our household the buying of meat was an important job, a man's job, not something, certainly, relegated to my mother. When my grandfather landed in this country, he set up a butcher shop, first on the Lower East Side and then, after ill-fated stints as the owner of a stable and then of a bedspring factory, he opened another store selling kosher meat in the Bronx, on Featherbed Lane.

During the Depression, when Naftali became ill and almost lost the store, my father, still a teenager, took over the books. I still have some of the now-crumbling account logs, as well as receipts from suppliers like Ida Frank, poulterer, and Sam Goldstein on Mt. Eden Avenue, who charged for a whole side of veal.

The buying of meat was an important job, a man's job—certainly not something relegated to my mother.

And so my father, who eventually used his facility with numbers to work as a businessman, was left, still, with his father's inheritance. All his life he retained a feeling for meat, an interest in looking at it and judging it and talking about it. These days most people don't spend time doing that; we just throw lamb chops into our shopping carts at the supermarket. When you observe kashrut, though, you're a little closer to meat. You don't get your meat in the supermarket, at least you didn't in those days. You thought about meat much more than other people did. This kind of thinking almost never takes place in a regular grocery store, even now.

In those years we always went to a kosher butcher, about five miles from our house, near Mott Avenue in Far Rockaway, when it was still a largely Jewish place and there was a bustling

shopping avenue. It was an event. We'd pick up my father at the subway station, all of us four girls and my mother, a few minutes earlier than usual, and we'd park in the lot at the back of Loehmann's and cut through the store, and on the other side of the big street—Cornaga? Central?—was Sam's. It was run by a big Jewish man with a mustache, perhaps the same Sam Goldstein from the Bronx, since my father seemed comfortably intimate with him. My father got along with Sam in the usual way he got along with everyone: he fought with him.

What did they fight about? Who knows? The cut or quality of meat, the amount of fat Sam managed to cut away, the beauty or lack thereof in a loin or a chop or a foreleg of lamb. Above all, the price, for how could one not barter for something so precious? Perhaps no one but my father was as capable of making such a simple transaction into a life-or-death melodrama. Yet it was like a play, where even though one actor was wielding a knife, the other did not take the threats or fury too seriously.

I did not make noise or trouble at the butcher store; none of us did. I'd push the sawdust back and forth with the side of my shoe; there was something magical in the way it separated and then clung together, as though by magnetism. I'd look out on the street where it was growing dark. I'd think of how disgusting the piece of tongue was, sitting there in the glass case, a real tongue cut out of a cow's mouth.

A fishmonger, about whom I remember little, except that we never bought fish from him, owned half the store. I think I had fresh fish two or three times during my childhood, despite the fact that we lived so close to the ocean. This was the era of meat; we ate steak several times a week, and had no idea what an eggplant was. Fish was something you bought in a frozen block from the supermarket or in breaded fish-stick form. At the butcher store, I looked into those bleary fish eyes as though into the eyes of aliens.

I know I am misremembering this, this vision of my father arriving home after we'd returned from the butcher and immediately, without removing his coat, beginning to grind meat, throwing in a whole onion and some garlic besides. I know because the meat had not been kashered yet, so it was not possible to grind it. But there was something about the grinding that seemed essential, as though it were a necessity that had to be dealt with immediately.

Certainly I do know that my mother would right away open the bags from the butcher, unfold the brown paper in which the meat had been wrapped, grab the pieces and throw them into a large washtub filled with water. Later, when most of the blood had been washed out, she'd take out the pieces one by one to salt them. Then she'd grab them one by one once more and slap them down on the board to drain. It seemed one of those instinctive things she just knew how to do, something women knew how to do.

I swore I would never touch raw meat.

Jews thought about meat much more than other people did.

As it was meant to, kashrut set our family apart, not only from non-Jews, of whom I knew few, but also from the largely non-religious Jewish community in which we lived, which had mostly left behind these antiquated customs in Europe or Brooklyn.

We four sisters were "those smart girls," those girls who didn't ride on the Sabbath, the girls who would never consider hanging

around with the Italian boys, laughing and smoking in front of the Central Avenue diner. Invited to a classmate's birthday party at the Hamburger Express, where the electric train ran down the counter delivering hamburgers, we sisters would have to accept the delivery of something specially made for us—insipid tuna salad on toast.

My grandparents are buried with my father's family in Queens, in a huge cemetery where the Grand Central Parkway and the Long Island Expressway intersect, in the shadow of the 1964 World's Fair remnant, the Unisphere. The cemetery has streets marked by little wooden signs on posts, and hundreds of tombstones with names like Katz and Rosen and Mandelbaum. Some have that symbol that says "he died too soon," with the detached limb of a tree. Very few have flowers, but many have small stones left by a friend or family member. I don't recall coming here when I was a child—my parents did not let us attend the burials of our relatives—and when the family comes now, for a funeral or unveiling, we always get lost.

But we know we're there when we get to the stone arch that was erected by the Jagolnizer Burial Society. My family is buried just behind this arch, two rows back. We stumble on the uneven ground but find them: my grandparents, Adele and Naftali Wolfsohn; my father; his three sisters, Sylvia and Diana and Esther; and Diana's little son, Edward, who died at the age of one-and-a-half, for whom there is just a tiny marker. My mother, subsumed by my father's family, is here, too.

Naftali, widowed early, had left Ukraine as a young man to find a new wife across the border, in Jagolnizer, Austria, and it was there, on his first day, walking about on the streets with a companion, that he spotted a beautiful young woman on a balcony above.

"That is the woman I will marry," he told his companion, and even when he discovered she was the daughter of the mayor, he was not deterred. Naftali, a gentle man with a ramrod spine, married her, and they came to America, where he continued his work as butcher and she became a suffragette.

The Jagolnizer section in the cemetery is a strange little stone village of dead people, made even stranger, I think, by the knowledge that there is no longer a Jagolnizer in Europe, at least not a Jewish one. That community is, as it were, dead and buried, while, this one, oddly, lives on.

Standing before all their graves, I remember my grandfather, my father, my mother, and my aunts all in one breath, and leave whatever stones I can find on the hard ground.

Now I think about meat only twice a year, on Passover and Hanukkah. Before Passover, despite my almost complete lack of observance the rest of the year, I engage in the ritualistic cleaning of my household, changing dishes, vacuuming my car, emptying pockets of old candy wrappers, and, finally, sweeping *hametz* into a paper bag with a feather and wooden spoon.

And I buy kosher meat: chickens, *flanken*, a fatty brisket for the seder. I go to a butcher, a few miles from my home in the New York suburbs, but it is nothing like Sam's: Saran-coated cuts of beef and lamb sit on their Styrofoam trays in low, coolly-lit display cases. There's no old-fashioned, butcher-block counter where Sam stands, and no fish. It's a small, narrow place in a strip mall. The other customers and I push around squeaky supermarket wagons that seem to have been sequestered from a variety of nearby stores, and we eye each other warily. I am sure I will commit some *kashrus* error. My only interaction with the butcher himself, who appears momentarily from his inner abattoir in his blood-spattered apron, is my meek request for a shank bone.

But my husband, who buys and prepares a whole brisket on Hanukkah (kosher mostly for the benefit of my relatives and friends), goes to a different butcher and carries on my father's tradition. Like my father, he's a man of science and a stubborn soul. He speaks directly to the butcher—who, it's true, hides behind a sliding glass window like a cashier in a sketchy neighborhood—and gets himself just the right combination of sinew and fat; the meat-man gets out his big knife and trims the beef and wraps it in brown paper; they haggle over the price. Still, there is no sawdust and no melodrama, and even though the brisket, marinated and fussed over and cooked at a slow braise for hours as per directions in Cook's magazine, is more delicious than my father ever dreamed of, the meat, pre-kashered, pre-salted, is no longer prelapsarian.

My mother died eight years ago and I inherited my father's meat grinder: a reminder, literally, of flesh and blood. It sits on its side, an object of beauty, in my non-kosher kitchen; a steely, quirky relic of family and community and maleness and history, when the shochet, the ritual slaughterer, as in the Passover song, "*Had Gadya*," was only one step down in importance from the Angel of Death and only two from the Holy One, Blessed be He.

PENNY WOLFSON *is working on an M.A. in decorative arts and design history at Parsons The New School for Design. Her writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Atlantic, and Print, and in anthologies, including* Best American Essays 2001. *She is the author of* Moonrise: One Family, Genetic Identity, and Muscular Dystrophy.

And These Are Different Days

Adaptation of Psalm 22

You are so far away, God.
I try to call you but my words are tinny, tiny.
Why have you gone?
I cry at my desk all day,
get no sleep at night,
and still, God, you do not answer.
You do not catch me when I fall.
Still I know that you are holy.
The children of Israel enthroned you.
In you my ancestors trusted:
they trusted you and you delivered them.
They cried to you and you rescued them.
There was no shame in this—
only trust that you would save.
But I am not them, and these are different days.
People see my tears, and wag their heads.
"She trusts in God," they mouth.
"Let God deliver her!" they say,
"Let God rescue her, since she delights in God!"
Yet I know:
you are the one who took me from the womb.
You made me trust you.
You put me at my mother's breast.
From my birth was I cast on you,
from my mother's womb you have been my God.
So please, be not far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.

Julie Sugar

An extraordinarily beautiful modernization of an ancient psalm, and of unyielding faith in a time of trouble, this poem brought tears to my eyes.
— ALICIA OSTRIKER

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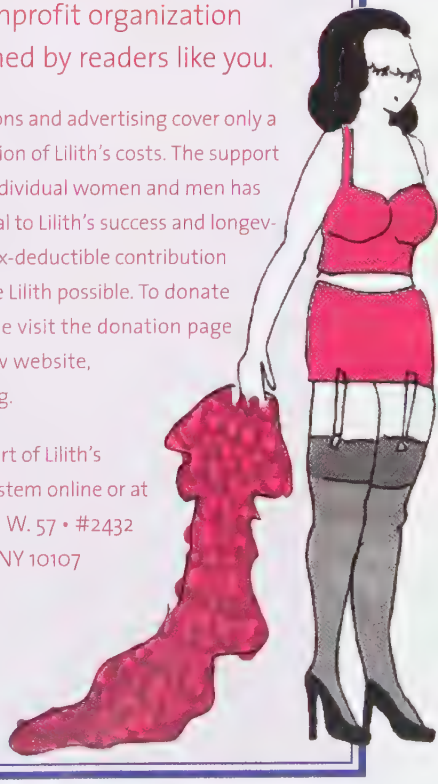


2013 Fiction Prize Winner

On discovering a man I was secretly in love with wrote a poem portraying me in an unflattering light

by STEPHANIE KING

AT LEAST POETRY IS NEARLY DEAD IN THE UNITED STATES, thus limiting the number of people who have access to my humiliation. It appeared on page 17 of the Fall issue of Ploughshares, a triumph for him, to have cracked into the literary elite. It would have been bearable for me alone to know that he didn't love me back, if only beneath the title of his poem, in neat italics, he had not written, *for Kimiko.*

"I didn't think I was so harsh on you," he said.

"Well, I did," I said, and hung up on him.

Thankfully, they have only 3,600 paid subscribers, the rest being newsstand copies that may or may not be sold. And it's not as if he wrote, *for Kimiko Savitsky, who is obsessed with me and thinks I don't know.*

My best friend Kit said I should look at it this way: at least I was mentioned in the pages of a national literary magazine. If Andrew ever becomes truly successful, I could be considered a muse. If I ever publish anything, people might feel like they've seen my name before. There is an upside. It's unbearable sometimes, being the friend of an optimist. Kit sent me a haiku to cheer me up:

Lovely Kimiko,
the stuff my dreams are made of.
Or else I'm just drunk.

"There's nothing from nature," I told him. "You've got to have an element from nature."

"But there's the turn," he argued. "I thought I needed to have juxtaposition *or* nature in a haiku. I didn't think I needed both."

There was always the turn. I kept waiting in my life for the turn to stop turning.

"Miss Savitsky, what rhymes with *depth*?"

My students were always asking me to help them rhyme words; it was inconceivable to them that a poem not rhyme, and who was I to tell them otherwise when it was on every standardized test they'd ever encountered? I taught them about meter and allusion and watched their brows furrow in frustration as they counted 5-7-5 on their fingers.

I taught English to ninth and twelfth graders; Kit taught tenth and eleventh. I told him they were ruined by the time they got back to me and he would always say, "ruined for what?" The ninth graders were doing their poetry unit and for the fifth year in a row I had to admonish some pencil-necked geek who said poetry was "gay."

"I didn't mean anything against homosexuals," he said in detention, as I made him copy *The Complete Poems of Wilfred Owen.*

"I'm sure you didn't," I said, "but you disrupted class. I'm sure next time you will be more respectful."

"At least Wilfred Owen died young," he said. "Fewer poems to copy."

I sat at my desk and corrected my seniors' essays as I watched the student, Josh, busy with his copying. Somewhere in this Jewish day school where I taught there was maybe a little Lauren or Allie (or maybe Ben) who watched this Josh's every move, seeking the glimmer of hope that he liked her (or him) and reading nuance into everything he said, every glance. On my desk, the magazine with its cursed "What You Thought" on page 17 mocked me. I wrote snatches of lines in my notebook, all of which were wholly unacceptable. Finally, I wrote:

On Reading the Poem You Wrote About Me

You've broken my heart;
I wish you would fucking die
I'll kill you myself.

Which was the worst haiku ever, but pretty much evoked how I was feeling.

"No nature," Kit said, reading it over my shoulder when he came to pick me up for the ride home. Unfortunately, he was right as usual, something else I hated about him.

My father nearly killed his parents with shock when he returned from a year studying in Japan and brought home my mother, Makiko. His parents were both Brooklyn born-and-bred, the children of Holocaust survivors, and they knew with

the unshakeable certainty of the truly mistaken that their sons would only bring home nice Jewish girls. My mother placated them, and kept my father from being disowned, by converting prior to their wedding. Her Hebrew was always terrible and singsong, and she couldn't pronounce its guttural <ch> or <r>. My brother Taro and I had the same almond eyes and black hair, although ours had a surprising amount of waviness to it, and we had confused synagogues in six different states. Approximately ten percent of my students asked, *Miss Savitsky, why do you teach in a Jewish school?*

Andrew was perfect for me, but he couldn't see it. He was the nice Jewish boy my grandmother kept wishing someone in the family would bring home. We met in the poetry section of Politics & Prose and started meeting for coffee in Dupont Circle about once a week. We exchanged poems and his were better than mine; I accepted this with the grace my mother always told me I should have in deference to my future husband. He had a girlfriend, some of the time, but they were in an "open relationship" that got progressively more open the more time I spent with him. After three months we started meeting for coffee in his apartment, and he would read me Whitman while we were lying in bed, me grading essays on "The Iliad" while he smoked fervently. I had always sworn that I would never date a man who smoked, but of course I never stuck to my guns about my own resolutions.

"Do you ever think about getting married?" I asked, after things had been like this for around seven months.

"Actually, Lisa and I are getting married," he said. "In December."

I started picking up my clothes and putting them on even as I was asking him to explain. I left, crying, and he didn't know what I was so upset about. At the time, he said that nothing would change; things would be as open as they had ever been.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GABRIELLA BAROUCH

On Finding Out the Man I Have Been Sleeping with Is Marrying Someone Else

biting words, you sting
sweetly and deep, like an asp
clutched by a lover

That was six months ago. I had done an admirable job of pretending that I was over it, even when winter came and I knew the wedding must be coming up. Kit carried me home drunk and cursing on the day I saw the wedding announcement in the newspaper, but he never said *I told you so* even though he had, in fact, told me so. I considered the whole thing just about forgotten when the poem was published, like an injury where the doctor has to re-break the bone for it to heal properly.

Christopher Maldonado, called "Kit" after watching too much Knight Rider as a child, six-foot-six and Northern Italian and thus as blond-haired and blue-eyed as they come, an eternal disappointment to his old-world Catholic parents for being flamboyantly gay as well as teaching in a Jewish day school: this was my best friend. We met in Teach for America in Southern Missouri, where we taught children who lived in houses that actually had dirt floors. This astonished both of us, who had been raised in northeastern cities, Kit in Boston and I in New York. We earned our MA degrees at Southwest Missouri State University and tried to make sure our pupils had socks or underwear and didn't have head lice. Lice eggs showed up a lot better against my black hair than they did in Kit's blond strands. We shampooed each other with Rid and picked at each other's scalps with the special little combs while drinking red wine and watching Godzilla movies. Kit loved Godzilla movies, or any creature feature that was badly dubbed or starred a fake-as-hell monster. We kept the tradition alive after I got him to move to D.C. by recommending him for the open position at my school.

Friday night I had him over for stir-fry and a newly restored edition of "Tarantula." We drank Italian table wine with our chicken and snow peas and got maudlin. Kit's impossibly young boyfriend had just broken up with him, for someone closer to his own age. I was six months shy of my thirty-third birthday and had recently become filled with the fear that I would never get married and have children. Some of which was prompted by my mother asking, *Aren't you afraid you will never have children?* In this sense, her conversion to Judaism had been successful.

"I feel like I'd be missing something," I told Kit.

"I feel the same way," he said. "I always wanted kids."

"You *hate* kids," I said.

"I hate married people," he said. "There's a difference."

Kit never campaigned for gay marriage but I could see him with an equally handsome, immaculately dressed man raising

In my family, we sat shiva and ate egg-salad sandwiches and looked miserably at one another. In Kit's family, they got drunk.

good-looking, impossibly well-mannered children. I wondered whose genes these children would have.

"Kimiko, if you can't find anyone else," Kit said, but he didn't say anything more or indicate what I was supposed to be finding them for.

"I know," I said. "I'll think about it."

I did think about it: would our children be tall? Who would they live with? Would we raise them to be Jewish? Would they call us "Mom" and "Dad," or would we think of something better? I would have dismissed it as a frivolous fantasy, brought on by too much Chianti. Instead, two weeks later, Kit's mother died.

When we were teaching in Missouri, I went to Boston over one of our winter breaks and stayed with Kit's family. It was clear to me that they thought I might be a girlfriend, even though he had told them I was just a friend, and they obviously should have suspected what he would eventually tell them. His mother was very uneasy around me, and Kit and I would make fun of her in whispers after everyone else had gone to bed. I was sleeping on the guest sofa in the basement; for Kit to have a woman he was not married to in his bedroom would have been scandalous.

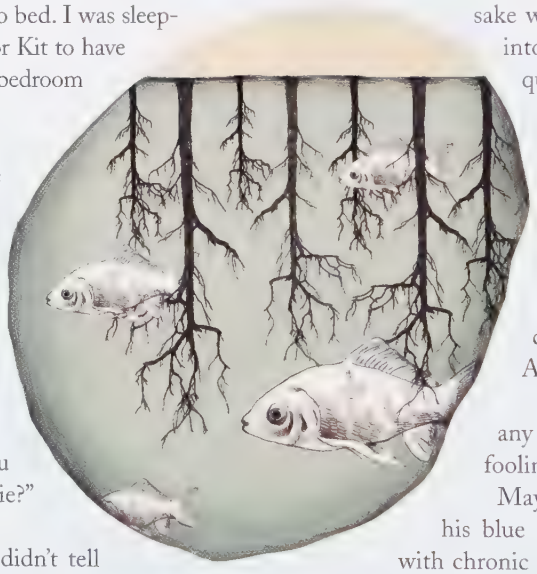
"You have to tell them," I told Kit.

"I can't," he said. "They still send me money once in a while. I'm not ready for them to never speak to me again."

"They love you," I said.

I could see that this was true. His mother sometimes ruffled his hair when she walked by him. He was an only child and had apparently been a difficult birth.

"When has love ever meant that you can't hurt someone until they want to die?" he asked.



I hated it when he was right. He didn't tell them that trip, or the next, or the one after that. To this day I don't think he has ever had "the conversation" with his father. He told his mother and it went as well as could be expected: she cried a lot and bemoaned the loss of her theoretical grandchildren.

"What about your friend?" she asked. "The exotic one, what's her name?"

"No, Mom," he told her.

"You could marry her," she said. "You could marry anyone. I don't care what you do in your spare time."

His entire life was her spare time. I don't know what his response had been. Now she was gone, and he would never be able to make her understand.

We planned to take the train together back to Boston for the funeral, so neither of us would have to sit next to a stranger. The train was early the next morning and Kit came to stay over. I left a note that afternoon on his desk,

On Using Sushi to Solve Your Emotional Problems

happiness bundles
little fish wrapped up in rice
when can I eat you?

"You're racist," Kit said. "You're always making some kind of Asian food. Can't you ever make a pizza?"

"Shut up or I'll make you eat gefilte fish," I said, neatly rolling spicy tuna rolls.

We ate sushi and drank sake, and when the sake was gone we moved on to pouring rum into cans of Coke. Eventually, we were quite drunk.

"Read me the poem," Kit said.

I refused. I didn't even want to look at it again, much less read it out loud. Even though I had been reading it approximately once an hour, and sadly, the text of it never changed. It was exactly parallel to the way I used to check my voicemail every hour to see if Andrew had called.

"I can buy a fucking Ploughshares at any Barnes & Noble," Kit said. "You're not fooling anyone in your misery."

Maybe, if his mother had not just died, if his blue eyes weren't as bloodshot as someone with chronic allergies or alcoholism, I wouldn't have shown him. As it were, I felt guilty for making a big deal of my tiny suffering. Being jilted by some moderately successful poet was nothing compared to losing a parent. If I were my mother, I would have told me to be ashamed of myself. Of course, my mother was not aware that until recently I had been sleeping with an engaged man.

He read it, his smile getting bigger as his eyes scanned each line. It was two pages long. When he was finished, he laughed.

"He sucks," Kit said.

I agreed, but I still thought it was a good poem. Better to be immortalized in a good poem than a bad one.

"Let's have a baby," I said, changing the subject.

"Okay," Kit said.

In retrospect, it was probably not the best idea to get drunk and sleep with *anyone* who would say "okay" upon having a baby proposed to them. But like so many other things, it seemed a good idea at the time.

I had tried on clothes in front of him, we had been skinny dipping, but nothing was as embarrassing as getting undressed that night. We both hurried and slithered under my cool cotton sheets with only swiftly sneaked peeks at one another. He still seemed to think it was a good idea, right up until the point where he first touched me, his hand clammy and pale as milk on my shoulder.

"I need to be drunker for this," Kit said.

"Thanks a lot," I said.

"Shut up," he shot back. "Have *you* ever slept with a woman?"

He had a point. We lay there for a while next to each other, lightly.

"Go to sleep," I said, curling up against him like a shrimp. "Next month we can try the turkey baster."

"That's disgusting," he said. "You're an attractive woman. That would be an insult to you."

I made him go to sleep anyway, and I thought I would lie awake a long time, thinking, but I fell into sleep easily and dreamed that I was gently rocking on an ocean, although it may have just been the room spinning from all the sake.

When my dad's father died, we sat shiva and ate egg-salad sandwiches and looked miserably at one another. Kit's family was drunk from the day before his mother's funeral and stayed that way through the interment. I had met several of his copious cousins before, on their various visits to D.C., and they all greeted me warmly, lots of huge hugs followed by wet kisses on the cheek. I normally shrank from such open affection but tried to handle it gracefully.

I was staying in Kit's room, sleeping on the floor. Strange that even after he came out I still had to sleep downstairs, but with his mother gone that was the first place they put me. She had a heart attack at the surprising age of 54, and I was grateful that it was not from the shock of anything Kit might have told her.

The night they put Mrs. Maldonado in her final resting place, after everyone had passed out drunk, I was awake in my sleeping bag on the floor next to Kit's bed. His breathing was sharp and irregular and I thought he might be crying, but I didn't want to embarrass him. Instead, I stared up at the ceiling, noticing that at some distant point in the past he had mapped out the northern sky in glow-in-the-dark stars, which had lost most but not their entire glow. A hand reaching down startled me; Kit asked if I was awake and I told him I was now.

"When I was little, my mom used to come in and read me stories when I got scared," he told me. "She used to say that was why I became an English teacher, because I liked to read stories to kids."

I told him I was sorry, but those words felt so inadequate slipping from my tongue that I didn't say anything more. There was more of the ragged breathing that might have been crying, which gradually subsided to the kind of long, even breaths that indicated deep thinking or the onset of sleep.

"I'm ready," he said. "Are we going to do this?"

"Okay," I said, slipping out of the sleeping bag and up into the bed.

Six months later, my first published poem appeared in Modern Haiku.

On Hearing of Your Mother's Death

petals unfurling
also inside, unnoticed
grief makes us careless

"See," Kit said. "Nature *and* the turn—you paid attention during your own haiku lesson."

"You're insufferable," I said. He rubbed my feet while I read the rest of the magazine.

I considered clipping it and sending it to Andrew, but decided I was better than that. I had heard from mutual friends that his new on-the-side girlfriend was a twenty-one-year-old bank teller with red hair and freckles, and she apparently thought Andrew was quite the intellectual. There was no word on whether Andrew and Lisa had decided to start their open family, or if the nanny would be off-limits.

My mother was very proud for me to have been published, although she would be much prouder to find out that she was finally going to be a grandmother. I was two months along and hadn't told her yet; my defense was going to be that I wanted to be "sure." She was suspicious when Kit and I rented a three-bedroom house in a gardeny little subdivision in Silver Spring. With Kit's mother gone, there was no one to comment on the scandal of our living in sin, in spite of our neatly arranged separate bedrooms.

"Why so many rooms, for just you two?" my mother asked, before Kit offered to show her our great kitchen, all blond wood and airy windows. He had bought matching kitchen towels in his excitement.

It had taken five increasingly embarrassing incidents to produce our future offspring. Kit's response when the second pregnancy test showed the desired plus sign: Thank God, I never have to do that again. I guess I should have been offended.

I didn't forward any of my magazines to my new address. I would just rather not know.

STEPHANIE KING *received her MFA from Bennington College and won the 2006 Quarterly West Novella Prize. She lives in Philadelphia.*

Jewsies, Jewosity & Identity

by ZAZI POPE

Yom Kippur is that holiest of Jewish Holy Days when Jews atone for their sins. Usually I take the day off from work—arguably a sin in itself, because I'm not sure how Jewish I really am. I wasn't raised as a Jew. I rarely go to temple. And my attempts to fast usually end at 11:00 a.m. with a cappuccino and biscotti. I didn't even know I was Jewish until I was well into my 20s, when my mother, Ruth, shared with me the stories of how she had come to learn, also as grown woman, that she was Jewish.

She was having coffee at an outdoor café in Paris with her younger brother, Michael, and a cousin of theirs whom they hadn't seen in years. No one can remember his name, so I'll call him "Max." While they were reminiscing about their war-time experiences, Max dropped a bombshell.

"It must have been so hard for you two during the War—being Jewish and all." Ruth and Michael were dumbfounded.

"What are you talking about?" Ruth demanded indignantly. "We're not Jewish!!!"

"Of course you are," Max responded. "Everyone knows you're Jewish." Everyone, apparently, except my mom and uncle.

They stormed back to the Chateau de Saint-Seine, a 17th-century timbered masterpiece in Villepreux, outside Paris, that my grandparents had rented from a cash-strapped nobleman. There Ruth and Michael confronted their father, Dickie, demanding an explanation. Dickie was short for "dictator"—which is how everyone referred affectionately to my grandfather, Otto Mandl.

"Cousin Max says we're Jewish. Is that true? Why did you never tell us?"

Dickie hesitated for a moment, and then came clean. Sort of.

"Well, children, I am Jewish, but your mother is not. We never told you I was Jewish because we wanted to protect you. Please don't talk to Lili about this because it will just upset her."

Lili was my grandmother, Lili Kraus, a world-renowned pianist who, during an uncharacteristic break from her grueling concert schedule, had suffered sunstroke after falling asleep sunbathing, and was in bed with a high fever. Ruth and Michael tiptoed out of the castle and not another word was spoken about their father being Jewish and failing to tell them.

Many years later, long after Dickie had passed away, my mom and Lili (even her family called her by her first name) were returning home to North Carolina after a trip to the Mayo Clinic, where Lili had undergone some tests for the rheumatoid arthritis that would soon end her illustrious career.

Riding in a small commuter plane from Atlanta to Asheville, they were caught in a summer rainstorm and the plane began to pitch violently. My mother and Lili were both convinced that they were about to crash. As the plane careened from side to side and thunder clapped through the wet sky, Mom reached for Lili's hand.

PHOTO COURTESY OF POPE/MANDL FAMILY

"Lili, in case this plane goes down, is there anything you want to tell me? Any deep, dark secret you've been carrying around—something that you want to share before we meet our maker?"

My grandmother's eyes grew wide. "What do mean 'secret'?" she asked nervously. "What kind of secret?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe an affair you had…an affair with Szymon Goldberg?" Goldberg was an acclaimed Polish-born violinist and conductor with whom Lili had recorded a series of Mozart and Beethoven sonatas in the 1930s. It was rumored that their mutual passion extended to more than just classical music. Lili shook her head.

"No, I never had an affair with Szymon. I loved your father."

"How about an abortion?" my mom asked. That had been another rumor.

"No, never an abortion," Lili replied gravely.

Mom tried once more. "Maybe that you're Jewish?"

Lili was shocked. "How did you know?" she whispered.

The real question was: how did we not know? There had been so many clues. The fact that Lili and Dickie fled Nazi Germany with their children to escape from Hitler in the early 1940's might have tipped us off. Their names: Kraus and Mandl. Lili was boisterous, irrepressible, insanely talented and beautiful. She looked Jewish, with her wild, luxurious mane of jet black hair, her strong nose and her shimmering dark eyes. She was constantly wracked by guilt, and deeply superstitious. She was obsessed with the number 9, and considered any numbers that added up to 9, or one of its multiples, to be harbingers of good fortune. She hated the Germans with an unbridled passion and refused to buy anything that was made in Germany.

Like Lili, my mother was virulently anti-German. She had been born in Berlin, where Lili happened to be teaching at the time, but she'd always lied about this, instead claiming Vienna as her birthplace.

Starting at the age of 10 or 11, I began to chide my mother for her deception and her rather skewed historical perspective. I had seen The Sound of Music, after all, and so knew a little bit about history myself.

"Mom, I get that you hate the Germans, but let's face it: Hitler was half-Austrian and the Austrians pretty much rolled out the red carpet for him. If you're going to lie about where you were born, at least pick a city that put up a good fight. Like London." Mom did not like hearing this from me.

"That is absolutely not true, Zazi. The Austrians hated Hitler too. They just had the good sense to bow to the inevitable."

And then, since she was the one who actually took me to see The Sound of Music, she would triumphantly conclude with, "What about Captain von Trapp? He trekked over the Alps with his family, risking all of their lives, rather than enlist in the Royal Navy!"

"I hate to argue, Mom," (this was a lie: in fact I loved to argue), "but I think Herr Zeller and Rolf were far more representative of the Austrian mind-set at that time." It was no use. I was never able to convince my mom to tell the truth about her birthplace. Uncle Michael, though, plainly more tormented by this fiction than either my mother or me, eventually persuaded her. But "Berlin" still sticks in her craw whenever she's asked the question.

Growing up in Appalachia, I didn't know many Jews. It is sad that my grandparents were apparently ashamed of being Jewish, but, as I later came to learn, hiding one's Jewish heritage was not altogether uncommon as fascism took root between the two World Wars.

With Central and Eastern Europe engulfed in anti-Semitism, and Lili's piano career beginning to take off, Dickie feared that their family might be targeted unless they concealed their Jewish identity. While Lili denied being Jewish, she always claimed to be very fond of Jews, affectionately referring to them as "the Jewsies"—a moniker whose playfulness concealed a disturbing condescension that was not apparent to me as a child. She was also full of pithy Jewish aphorisms. When I would complain to her about my big nose, for example, she would slowly nod her head and proclaim sagely: "As the Jewsies always say, Zazi, 'big nose, big character'."

Lili Kraus, world-renowned pianist, denied being Jewish, though she always claimed to be very fond of Jews, affectionately referring to them as "the Jewsies."

These pearls of wisdom failed to mollify me. I did not want a big character any more than I wanted a big nose. I wanted a nice small nose and a nice small character to go with it, so that I would blend in with everyone else, instead of always feeling like I didn't belong.

When I got to Swarthmore College, though, I felt, for the first time really, that I did belong. This was largely because I was surrounded by Jews. My roommate and most of my close friends were Jewish, and, to my surprise, they all told me that I seemed Jewish to them, too.

"Are you sure you're not Jewish?" they would ask me, incredulously. "You look Jewish. You act Jewish. You're practically the most Jewish person we know. How can you not be Jewish?"

"I'm flattered you think so," I'd respond, truthfully. "But I was raised as a Christian, and baptized by a Lutheran pastor—Albert Schweitzer, no less—so I'm pretty sure I'm not Jewish."

It wasn't until after Lili passed away that my mom recounted to me what Lili had told her in that stormy plane ride to Asheville years earlier. Mom doesn't know why she didn't tell me at the time, and I can only surmise.

Perhaps she didn't realize the impact of Lili's "confession"—that Lili's being Jewish made her children and grandchildren Jewish, too, and that maybe this was an important piece of information to share with us. Perhaps she thought that since Lili had only revealed her Jewishness in the belief that they were both going to perish, she owed it to Lili to keep the disclosure in confidence, at least while she was alive.

Or it could be that Mom found the revelation so inconsequential—she had obviously suspected the truth—that she simply forgot about it after the plane landed safely, only to dredge it up years later when we were reminiscing about Lili after her death.

Mom's revelation had a greater impact on me, however, triggering many questions. Was I now, in my late twenties, supposed to embrace my newfound Jewish identity, and if so, how? Was I Jewish if Judaism had never been part of my life? Did I want it to be part of my life? What did it mean to be Jewish? Was it a religious affiliation, or a cultural one, or an ethnic one, or some or all of those? What if I didn't want to keep kosher, or observe the Sabbath, or go to temple? Would I be able to continue to use favorite expressions like "for Christ's sake"? What would happen to my treasured collection of Christmas tree ornaments? If I didn't embrace Judaism was I guilty of the same Jewish self-hate that had afflicted my mother and grandparents?

These questions took on even more significance after I had children. My husband, who is not Jewish, and in fact abhors organized religion of any kind, did not object to religious education for our children, but he made it clear that this was my project, not his.

With our son, Jeremy, my attempts to instill a grounding in Jewish faith and culture were uneven at best, but after our daughter, Lili, was born—we named her after her great-grandmother—I decided to be more proactive and we joined Sholem, a secular and progressive Jewish group that met weekly in Culver City. I took Lili for a couple of years and she didn't mind it, although I sometimes felt that the bagels and cream cheese they served were the star attraction for her.

When Lili was small, she inadvertently coined the word "Jewosity" as she was struggling to conjure up "Judaism" during a family discussion about religion. I wish I could tell you that I finally cracked the conundrum of my own Jewosity. But that wouldn't be true. I'm not sure I'll find the answers by going to temple, either, although I'll continue to take the day off on Yom Kippur. Even if it means feeling guilty about it.

"In case this plane goes down, is there any deep, dark secret you want to tell me?" my mother asked my grandmother.

I wish that my grandmother Lili were alive today so that I could ask her why she kept her Jewish identity hidden for so long, and at what cost. How painful it must have been for her. She was clearly consumed with guilt and shame. Why else would she have converted to Catholicism shortly before she died? I would hold her knobbly, veiny hands—still muscular from decades of glorious piano-playing—and tell her that it is never too late to come out of the shadows. That dying with a secret is worse than living with one. And indeed, that our Jewosity is worthy of celebration.

ZAZI POPE *lives in Los Angeles. She is an attorney in the entertainment industry and an occasional writer, artist and temple-goer.*

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2013 Poetry Prize Winner

Away from Babi Yar

They will never come for citizens like us,
Zahar would say, while most of Kiev fled
far west into unarmored steppes.

His family stayed to watch him polish
citrine and amber rings, display them
in his storefront, and sell them to the few

remaining Russian wives who refused
to show they'd turned to widows.
By September 1941, the soldiers too

came for the jewels; they dressed
the family in gold, and walked them
glowing through the streets

where a crowd had gathered:
a city of stone in lines of beryl stars.
The father and mother, dark, precise

features, wealthless now, were set in rows
behind others who looked the same,
but their daughter was light enough to slip

yellow off of her dress. *You don't belong*
with dirty Zhids! spoke a medaled man, his gun
pointed beyond where she could see.

Rayachka! Her father's words flew up
like bits of earth as she began to fade
farther from that name. *Where are you going?*

His echo slapped against her nape –
the strike of dirt over a Jewish coffin
with the back of a shovel blade:

courtesy to the dead, a reluctance
to let them go. She disappeared, calling,
I will be right back. Her faint reply

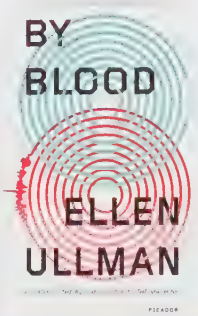
just hovered in the dust.

Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach

Of the Holocaust poems submitted, this was the most haunting to me, as it evoked, simultaneously, a family about to be massacred, and a daughter who, by abandoning her family, will escape. Do we judge her?
— ALICIA OSTRIKER

REVIEWS

Loneliness and Therapy



Woke Up Lonely (Graywolf Press, $26), by **Fiona Maazel**, is riveting and wild and often hilarious. From the noisy streets of Washington, DC to the underground tunnels of Cincinnati—even to North Korea and back—Maazel deftly weaves the story of Thurlow Dan, a cult leader drowning in his own unexpected success, and his brilliant and erratic ex-wife Esme, an FBI agent sent in to keep him in check. Thurlow and Esme chase one another around in circles, and it's rarely clear which one of the two is one step ahead of the other. It reminds me of Salinger's opening to *Franny and Zooey*—this is "a love story, pure and complicated."

By Blood (Picador, $16), by **Ellen Ullman**, takes a different track. It's In Treatment meets CSI—a thriller and a drama. The narrator, himself of dubious moral character, eavesdrops on a compelling therapy session next door to his office and becomes obsessed with following the weekly developments. The client, an ambitious, workaholic lesbian, learns that her birth parents were Jewish. Meanwhile, the therapist, a German woman, struggles to keep her own family's Nazi history a secret. This *extremely* creepy narrator secretly intervenes in the client's tortured search for her birth family.

Both of these novels have elaborate and winding premises—rivers with a hundred branches. And both authors run a tight ship, keeping all the balls in the air to make for thoroughly captivating fiction.

But what has most stuck in my mind since reading these two books is the confrontation of the information age with an era of alienation. The characters in these novels are each struggling with crushing loneliness and anonymity, and seek solace in relatively formal therapeutic relationships. Thurlow Dan has founded a cult with millions of members that tackles loneliness head-on. Radical honesty meets group therapy—leading to impulsive confessions of deep secrets across the country and spontaneous intimacy with strangers. (Randomly, in a laundromat: "Hello, I recognize you. My name is Max Chen. I haven't paid my taxes in three years. I have a wife who doesn't love me and a girlfriend who doesn't love me, either, now that I stopped paying for her English classes.") By taking the pairing of alienation and therapeutic recourse to the nth degree, Maazel explores the clash and paradox of closeness and secrecy—with absurd and darkly hilarious results.

Ullman's characters similarly yearn to be seen—pushing and pulling at one another while trying to hold on to their most shameful secrets. Their secrets—and their shames—are what keep them alone and what connect them to each other. Defending his schemes, the narrator tells us, "It was a time of the truest lonelinesses (since loneliness is plural, various in its aspects and effects); and by this I mean not simply the absence of companionship but a complete estrangement from all feelings except self-loathing. The world tolerated me, I believed, only because of my subterfuge: the fraud I perpetuated which fooled them into thinking I was human."

These authors are asking us to think about the price of loneliness, the pain of alienation, and the possibility of connecting. In the words of Thurlow Dan, "Here is something you should know: we are living in an age of pandemic. Of pandemic and paradox. To be more interconnected than ever and yet lonelier than ever."

SONIA ISARD *is Lilith's associate editor.*

On the Horizon

The latest novel from **Dara Horn** manages to combine recent unrest in Egypt, the nineteenth-century discovery of the mountainous archival materials in the Cairo Genizah, the writings of Maimonides and a high-tech ripped-from-the-headlines tale of irreparable sisterly conflict.

This interweaving of history and personal drama is nothing new in Horn's fiction. In *The World to Come* an art heist draws together the Holocaust, the Moscow Art Theater and the Vietnam War. In *All Other Nights* she takes the reader into traumas of Jews North and South during the Civil War. These books, and her first novel, *In the Image*, use personal, page-turning drama to carry scholarly disquisitions on the intellectual, social, spiritual and political movements of an era.

Horn's new novel is *A Guide for the Perplexed* (W.W. Norton, $25.95), which she described recently as the first American novel to deal with the Arab Spring. It has so many different threads on the loom simultaneously that a reader might have wished for separate novels dealing with each. Siblings play the binding role in each of the narrative patterns in this book. Josie (for Josephine) Ashkenazi, like the biblical Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers, was once abandoned in a deep pit by her older sister and her taunting pals during a childhood camp outing. The sisters' rivalry and cruelties continue into adulthood.

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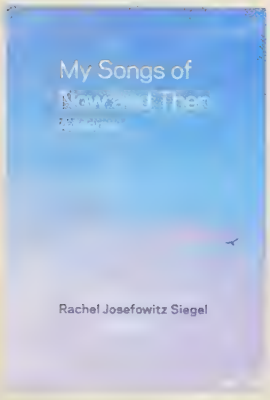
Notes from Lilith's Editors

A Special Collection of Women's Holocaust Writing

Women's Holocaust experiences are a distinct lens through which to view the Holocaust and its manifold repercussions for Jewish culture today. Thanks to the generous support of Lilith board member Frances Brandt, Lilith has created the Frances and Kathryn Brandt and Lilith Magazine Women's Holocaust Memoir Collection at the University of Michigan. While the narrative recounted in each book is unique, the collection is even greater than the sum of its parts: together, these individual stories amplify the chorus of Jewish women's voices, giving vital attention to the experiences of those who survived and those who were lost.

The University of Michigan Graduate Library



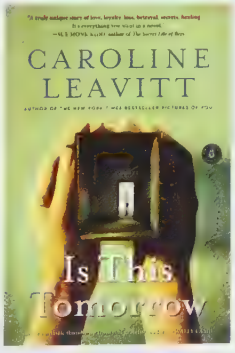
A Gender Lens in Memoir

A recent edition to our understanding of the arc of women's lives is ***My Songs of Now and Then*** (iUniverse, $21.95), by Lilith author and early board member **Rachel Josefowitz Siegel**. Siegel is a therapist and writer whose foundational studies in the field of social work paved the way for a new vision of feminist psychotherapy. Her earlier books include *Jewish Women in Therapy: Seen but Not Heard* (with Ellen Cole) and the co-edited *Women Changing Therapy* and *Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories: Acts of Love and Courage.* Born in Berlin in 1924 and raised in Switzerland, she escaped from Europe to the United States in 1939. This new book is an engaging collection of deftly written vignettes, covering scenes from her European childhood, then exploring the balance between her work and her family life, and the joys and trials of aging as a Jewish woman and conscious feminist.

Josie, wunderkind of the tech world, has invented a program that will store every memory and experience; she names it Genizah. And when, elevated by fame and fortune, she is convinced by her sister to accept a flattering invitation to the new library in Alexandria, she's kidnapped and assumed executed. Her sister moves into the bed of Josie's husband, and takes over mothering Josie's young daughter.

Meanwhile, scholar Solomon Schechter, in the 1890s in Cambridge, muses on the life of his twin brother, who is making a life in the swamps and sunshine of Eretz Israel. Schechter is about to visit the 300,000 scraps of paper in the Genizah, or storeroom of the old synagogue in Cairo, where any document with letters written in the sacred language of Hebrew has been preserved, crumbling with age and mysterious in its possibilities. The Genizah, untouched, holds missing fragments of sacred texts along with the powdery remnants of 500-year-old grocery lists.

Also meanwhile—at least in Horn's telling—Moses Maimonides, twelfth-century physician and scholar in Alexandria, the author of the original *Guide for the Perplexed*, sends his younger brother on a fruitless herb-acquiring mission to the Far East. While these sibling stories play out in Horn's telling, each adding some resonance to the central drama of the kidnapping, Josie is being held captive in the City of the Dead, chained and beaten, kept alive only because of her gifts in coding.



You can fault this novel for its unlikely yoking of potboiler, spiteful-sister drama and historical veracity, but its central explorations about memory (what we hold dear, what we try to hold in mind, what we lose our hold on) are fascinating, and the core idea behind Josie's brilliant software program—that there's merit in documenting everything as it really was, not as we remember it to have been—is more chilling in its own way than the cell where Josie's tormentors have closed her up.

SUSAN WEIDMAN SCHNEIDER *is Lilith's editor in chief.*

Summer Suggestions

Your summer reading list might include these books: Set in the 1950s, ***Is This Tomorrow*** by **Caroline Leavitt** (Algonquin, $14.95) captures the airlessness of that repressive era. For Ava Lark, being Jewish—like being divorced—is just one more code word for other. Since Ava is both, she is immediately suspect in her small community. And when Jimmy, her twelve-year-old son's best friend goes missing, the neighbors—already contending with the Cold War, Communist paranoia, and bomb threats—use his disappearance as yet another reason to ostracize her.

The sudden death of a spouse—or an ex—is the jumping off point for two oddly similar new novels. In ***The Widow Waltz*** by **Sally Koslow** (Viking, $27.95) Georgia Waltz has just finished sitting shiva when she learns that her husband Ben drained all their mutual assets, leaving her and their daughters penniless; in ***The Glass Wives*** by **Amy Sue Nathan** (St. Martin's Griffin, $14.99) Evie Glass finds herself unwillingly drawn into a relationship with her ex-husband's new wife and baby. In each of these edgy novels, death offers the survivors an unexpected opportunity for self-examination, growth and, finally, spiritual transformation.

The essays in *An Enlarged Heart* by **Cynthia Zarin** (Knopf, $24.95) examine subjects as diverse as the author's winter coats and the potentially fatal disease that afflicts her young daughter. Zarin, a poet, writes with precision and focus. When she learns just how serious her child's illness is, she says, "Before she was born, before we decided to have a child together—she is the first child of our marriage and the only one—I thought, we are too happy, we are asking the evil eye to come among us.... Don't shine too much light or the Devil will see. The Devil is like a moth—he is attracted to the light...Stop reading twigs in the forest you idiot Russian, my oldest friend laughs at me. But now it has come to pass."

YONA ZELDIS MCDONOUGH *is Lilith's fiction editor. Her fifth novel,* Two of a Kind, *is out in September.*

Women Graphically

Letting It Go by **Miriam Katin** (Drawn and Quarterly, $24.95) and *The Property* (Drawn and Quarterly, $24.95) by **Rutu Modan** allow their creators to use the graphic novel to explore modern feelings about the Holocaust. Katin's is a graphic memoir, and Modan creates fiction; each stars a female Holocaust survivor visiting lands connected to horrific past events.

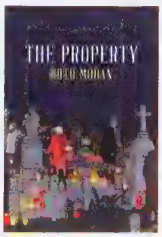
Katin explored her experience as a Hungarian Holocaust survivor in her first book, *We Are On Our Own* (2006). In *Letting It Go* she shows herself as a successful graphic novelist, whose employers have included MTV and Disney, feeling insecure about her personal life. Her grown son is moving to Berlin, and Katin is appalled. She can imagine Berlin only as a violent, dangerous, deadly place full of anti-Semites.

Eventually she goes to Berlin to visit her son, and visits the city again when her art is featured in its Jewish Museum. The Holocaust is always in the background, but rarely confronted directly in these pages, which are primarily about Katin's modern experiences with Berlin as she sees firsthand what she perceives as the emotional and cultural changes that have taken place there. Instead of going for a dark tale of turmoil, Katin crafts a calmer, sometimes even humorous story of a woman coming to grips with her knee-jerk reactions. "I guess the Germans moved on," she comments when she finds no signs of anti-Semitism, "and I didn't."

From *The Property* by Rutu Modan

In *The Property,* Rutu Modan introduces us to Regina Segal, a fictional Holocaust survivor who hasn't been back to her native Warsaw since the war. On her trip to her old home she is accompanied by her granddaughter, Mica, an intelligent and strong-willed young woman. The ostensible reason for the trip is to reclaim property lost during the war, but the reader can soon ascertain its deeper purpose. Modan does a great job of intro-

From *Letting It Go* by Miriam Katin



ducing a series of distinct characters and having them interact. Despite its underlying seriousness, the book is peppered with humor on the foibles of humanity's little misunderstandings and power plays. But then simple scenes — like Regina looking out her car window in Warsaw and having the window shot turn into memories — can pack a wallop.

Like Miriam Katin herself, Modan's fictional Regina struggles as she confronts the people and places of her past. Standing in a cemetery, she says, "The only justice would be if everyone here were raised from the dead." Both books show the intensity of feelings the survivors face, which the younger generation can't fully understand, not growing up with the same fearful experiences.

Despite the parallel content, the stylistic differences show the versatility of the graphic novel format. Katin's art is brightly and gracefully rendered in colored pencils, and the sway and blending of her colors is beautiful. Modan doesn't have the same colorful flair; her pages appear in clean panels and straight colors, very tidy and exact. In each case the art carries the story, as the writers use both dialogue and images to take on a searing subject.

DANICA DAVIDSON *has written about graphic novels for MTV, CNN, Publishers Weekly, Booklist and more. danicadavidson.com.*

"Illness is friendship's proving ground"

From: *How to Be a Friend to a Friend Who's Sick*

If you buy into my honesty-is-the-best-policy approach to visiting a friend who is sick, here are some ground rules of the new Truth Telling Etiquette:

1) *Ask the patient to be honest with you and all their friends and express their druthers,* whether it's zero visitors, certain hours of the day when friends are welcome, a limited number of people allowed in the room at once, or a time limit for each visit.

2) *Be honest with yourself about* your *attitude toward the visit.* The everyday demands of work and family are stressful enough. Would you feel more guilty disappointing your friend than disappointing your kids or shortchanging your work project? If so, swallow your stress and visit the friend (assuming they want visitors). But if you'd feel more guilty disappointing your kids (say because you've been out every night this week) or facing your boss (who's been unusually critical lately), then explain the situation honestly to the patient.

3) *Think through your role in the visit.* This is yet another instance of the obvious having to be spelled out. Ask yourself: what am I prepared to do and what do I expect my visit to accomplish? To avoid misconceptions and misapprehensions, it's a good idea to review your expectations in advance. Do you feel that, having taken time out of your day, you've done enough, or are you prepared to make your self useful by pitching in on one or more of the following chores while you're there:

cook a meal
tidy up
clean the kitty litter
fix the DVD player
offer to make a pick up at the drugstore or dry cleaner
water the plants
sweep the floor
walk the dog
do the dishes
dress the patient's wound
help them bathe or dress
take them to the toilet
change their sheets
rub their aching back
pay their bills
pack or unpack for them
babysit their kids
shovel their driveway
make calls to cancel any appointment
ask what else you can do to help

You may not know what your friends need until they tell you, or what you have to give unless you make the effort to notice what's needed. Remember to Ask and Act.

4) *Don't visit if you can't abide silence.* There's a chance that all your sick friends want from you is to "be there." People who give good visits are good listeners. They pick up vibes. They know when to comfort and when to keep still.

5) *Be prepared to respond without flinching to whatever scene or circumstances greet you during your visit.* Some illnesses leave a brutal imprint on their victims' appearance, capacities, and state of mind. Are you willing to stay the course even if your friend is hideously unsightly? Even if they're not getting better?

6) *Be sensitive to your friend's losses.* Discomfort, pain and misery are hard enough to witness. What can break your heart when you visit a friend is the confrontation with their multiple losses, whether it's loss of hair (chemo); facial and bodily contours (steroids); energy and vigor (from the illness or medications); loss of their time, freedom, and independence (from being bed-bound or disabled); or their forward motion (a stalled education; interruption of their social, sexual, and developmental progress).

Beyond your control are the aching, sometimes irreversible losses that often go hand in hand with grave illness, but the one loss you have the power to prevent is the loss of your sick friend's friends, starting with yourself.

LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN

AVAILABLE FROM PUBLICAFFAIRS, A MEMBER OF THE PERSEUS BOOKS GROUP.

A Salon! Even Better Than a Book Club!

One afternoon in May I watched as 25 women and four men, average age mid-80s with some up in their 90s, streamed into a room clutching copies of Lilith. Those using walkers deposited them in a small alcove, like cars in a parking lot. Soon, every available seat was taken, as people, eyes alert, waited for me to kick off the first-ever Lilith salon—one of the discussion groups meeting in more than a hundred locations to talk about the content in each new issue of the magazine—at the Esplanade, a senior residence on New York's Upper West Side.

"Who was Lilith?" asked one woman. Discussion of the myth came along with a mention of that old shtetl custom of the bendel, a red string around the wrist to ward off evil, which made the women smile. "She was a little bit bad!" said one person gleefully. These bubbehs were absolutely getting it.

I suggested beginning our salon conversation with Diane Balser's piece on "Non-Motherhood by Choice," in the Spring 2013 issue. The subject struck a nerve, instantly

"When I was young, having children was something you just did," said one woman.

Said another: "I had an aunt, she never had children. She was too busy, she worked in the garment trade, she was a leader in the ILGWU."

"My Aunt Bessie, we were like her children," offered another woman. "And when we used to ask her why she never got married, she said, 'obody asked me!'"

To which a third woman replied: "Aunt Bessie wasn't telling the truth! I'm sure that somebody asked her!"

I grabbed the bait. "Well, we don't know the facts about Aunt Bessie," I said, (wondering if she, like so many of those spinster aunts of old, was a lesbian). "But let's talk about what marriage meant back then. Was getting married, and having children, a choice when you were young?"

Three women sitting in the middle row shook their heads, emphatically. "No," said

"I forced myself to weed the overgrowth"

From: *Sacred Housekeeping: A Spiritual Memoir*

One day I added another important commitment—every day I was going to make my bed.

Not to please my mother or to impress company, but to honor my life. It became a daily affirmation that I matter, what I do matters, and life matters. I spend a lot of time in bed. It's my place of comfort and safety. It looks better when it's made up; it feels better when it isn't soggy and rumpled.

This realization changed everything. Making my bed always seemed to me an act of pointlessness. Why bother? It's only going to get messed up again in a few hours. Not making my bed was proof that my existential angst was correct—my statement that the inevitability of death robbed life of its meaning and therefore nothing mattered. I have now come to understand why Sloth is one of the seven deadly sins, but in those days it was a badge of honor. Slovenliness was my rebellion against a mother who had "a place for everything and everything in its place" and a society that I felt had no place for me.

I've accepted that the Sloth Monster abides within me and will always be part of me. When I try to ignore it or get mad at it, it attacks me. I have to bribe it or manipulate it or negotiate with it..."If you'll help me honor my commitments to myself all week, we can spend the weekend in bed watching Law & Order re-runs...I'll treat us to goose-down pillows and 1,000-thread count new sheets."

I hated routine for many years, but now I perform my rituals and routines with missionary zeal so I don't lose my footing. These are my mitzvot, sacred acts. They are personal, not communal, chosen, not commanded. They remind me to be grateful to God for life: to "eat, be satisfied and bless."

I have the same conversation with myself every morning when one part of me wants to sleep an extra hour and the other one wants to get up and work out, and every night when one of me wants to drop my clothes on the floor and the one is committed to hanging them up. Leave the dish in the sink? Wash it and put it away. It builds spiritual muscle.

All these years later it's still a daily battle. I still get lazy and busy with distractions and acquisitions. I buy new underwear at Costco and don't bother to throw out the old. I keep things that I don't wear for over a year, a gross violation of The Organizer's Manifesto. I buy things I don't need because they're a bargain, another violation. But what's different is that now from time to time, I force myself to face down the monster and to weed the overgrowth.

I no longer view my defects of character as evidence of my failure or as enemies to be vanquished. They are evidence only of my humanness. My daily spiritual struggle is to own them and "invite them in for tea," as Ram Dass taught.

During my group sessions at Beit T'Shuvah [Rosetto is the founder of this nonprofit drug and treatment organization], I began to notice that residents were adopting my evolving insights and epiphanies. A sweet and sardonic 24-year old girl who had been in eight rehabs lit up when I told her my story about housekeeping as an antidote to existential despair. "I finally did my laundry after putting it off forever," she said. "I was folding the towels when I got that it's not about finding God in the Burning Bush... it's about doing your laundry. God really is in the details.

I grinned.

HARRIET ROSSETTO

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Read more on books and authors at the Lilith blog. *Lilith.org/blog*

one, indignantly. Her blue eyes gleamed. "It was just expected of you!"

I said, "But now, it's different, isn't it?"

"Women didn't have choices then," said a gray-haired woman with glasses. "But now," she said approvingly, "times have changed." All over the room, heads were bobbing up and down in agreement. "Women always had to make all the sacrifices back then!" said another. My mother, Esther Braun Sparberg, 91—she had recently moved into the Esplanade—talked about how she pulled off being a working mother during the 1960s, at a time when women were told that they should stay home and raise their families. I asked the crowd if they remembered the explosive reaction to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* when it came out in the early 1960s. More emphatic nodding.

Then one of the four men—his name was Harry—raised his hand; the other three had been sitting quietly, listening to the discussion. Harry said: "Some women think that they can stop fighting for their rights now. But they need to keep at it."

Good point, Harry. But don't worry. These irrepressible women around you, whose combined ages totals something like 1800 years, are continuing to raise their voices.

ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

The power of conversation! Lilith salons are quarterly gatherings where you'll encounter new ideas and new people when you come together to talk about the original and provocative thinking you find in each new issue. Lilith will provide trigger questions to help get the conversation started. Learn more about Lilith salons—to join one or start your own—visit www.Lilith.org/salons or call us at 212-757-0818.

HAPPENING

Top: Lea Gottlieb
Right: Topkapi Collection, 1989,
Bottom: Sinai and Sunna

How Gottex Got Its Name

The Design Museum of Holon, which opened in 2010, recently featured Israeli fashion designer Lea Gottlieb (1918-2012), perhaps best known as the originator of the Gottex swimwear you can now buy all over the world. The museum is assembling an Experience Archive, comprised of a collection of international and Israeli design-related objects which will be an interactive environment for theoretical design research and practical implementation. *dmh.org.il*

Protecting Your Personal Archive

How can you preserve precious family letters? A card from a beloved teacher? The newspaper clipping where your work is mentioned? Not necessarily in that old manila folder! A shelf off the floor in your linen closet may have the best temperature and humidity, and you ought to photocopy that newsprint original onto acid free paper. Remember to enjoy your memories, advises the Jewish Women's Archive. More on preservation at *jwa.org/stories/how-to-preservation.*

Covering, Uncovering and Recovering

"Sinai and Sunna: Covering and Uncovering" is a project inspiring nuanced discussion between Muslims and Jews. Through performance and audience interaction, this project hopes to engage and challenge "dichotomies" such as Jew/Muslim, secular/religious, feminist/traditionalist, in order to get us all thinking artistically, intellectually, personally and politically about women, contemporary culture and religious traditions. Are you interested in sharing your story about your struggle or engagement with the tradition? Interested in bringing this project to your institution? *movingtorah.com/sinai-and-sunna.html*

Left: Nendo, Cabbage Chair, 2008. Design Museum Holon
Right: Susan C. Dessel
Bottom: Jewish Blessing Flags, Nepal

Videos! Photos! Shoes!

Bezalel, the Jerusalem art school established in 1906, has been marking its more than 100 years with a traveling exhibition featuring over 100 objects, including 2D-animation and video installations representing its diverse undergraduate departments of fine art, photography, fashion & jewelry, industrial design, visual communications, architecture, screen-based arts, ceramics & glass. Bezalel has a student exchange program with over 150 partner art schools around the world. *bezalel.ac.il*

Survivors at the End of Life

"What do you mean your father doesn't know how his mother died?" Or "Is his memory is going?" Often someone taking a medical history from a Holocaust survivor has no idea what experiences she or he has endured that make standard questions unanswerable. A new online resource guide trains health care professionals and others dealing with Holocaust survivors who, at the end of life, can pose unique challenges. End of life decisions may be especially difficult for children who know their parents overcame extreme odds to stay alive. The guide discusses how post-traumatic stress disorder can manifest itself in first- and second-generation families. This unique guide comes from Metropolitan Jewish Hospice and Palliative Care (MJHS) in New York and was supported by Targum Shlishi and the MJHS Foundation. *issuu.com/mjhs/docs/2013_holocaust_booklet_fnl_1/1*

Celebrate & Study

"Jewish Women's University for a Day" in Houston offers you visiting scholars—including Rabbi Amy Kalmanofsky of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Stephanie Siegmund of Princeton and Wendy Zierler of Hebrew Union College—along with local experts, for a unique adult learning program. It's co-sponsored by Context at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rice University and the University of Houston on the Rice campus, Sunday, October 27. Contact Olga Lara at *ollara@jtsa.edu*

Ethical Shopping for Jewish Stuff

Fair Trade Judaica, as its name suggests, promotes ethically manufactured goods. Founder Ilana Schatz says the organization's mission, a core Jewish value, is to expand awareness about where and how our mezuzot, hanukkiyot and other ritual objects—like the *hamsa* prayer flags below— are made, distributed, and sold. *fairtradejudaica.org*

The Chicken Chronicles

Artist Susan C. Dessel has created a suite of 14 drawings inspired by food traditions of Jews in New York, from the arrival of the first Jewish refugees to Nieuw Amsterdam in 1654 from Recife, Brazil, to the Jewish and immigrant communities of today. The works convey the challenges faced by women responsible for meeting the requirements of traditions and laws of food preparation. The visual language of Dessel's allegorical tale also honors the traditional sampler, including a pattern of playful lobsters, representing the bounty of non-kosher, forbidden foods, and Dessel's belief that "art gives people freedom to contemplate things they might not feel comfortable talking about in today's charged environment." *desselstudio.net*
Until August 18 at Gomez Mill House—the oldest standing Jewish dwelling in North America in Marlboro, New York. *gomez.org*

compiled by Naomi Danis

For events and projects taking place between issues, follow Lilith on Facebook and Twitter, check out Lilith.org, and sign up for the free e-mail newsletter. Send ideas for this section to info@Lilith.org.

NOT YOUR ZAYDE'S *SHOKL*

THE KINESTHETICS OF FEMINIST PRAYER

by STACEY ZISOOK ROBINSON

When my son was born, I cradled him against my heart, arms wrapped surely around his small body. I stood, swaying — our breaths mingled, our hearts beating in a call and response, one beat answering to the next—in a slow, side-to-side rock that felt like a sliver of eternity.

I could feel his body relax into the motion, like oceans, like drifting, like peace. I loved the simplicity of that rhythm, the warmth of him, the smell of his newness and his infinite possibilities. As he gentled, my own body followed.

When I found God again....

No. When I found the need to be part of a community in order to engage and have a conversation with God as part of that community, I began to pray more formally. I began, as it were, to *davven*. In earnest.

It started with Friday nights—joyous, raucous celebrations that ushered in Shabbat with drums and foot-stomping. Saturday mornings came later, when I learned how to be quietly joyful, to be still. If *erev* Shabbat was a communal romp in the fields of the Lord, *shabbos* mornings were a way to find individual sanctity in the midst of a holy community.

Where my grandfather rocked forward and back in prayer, I sway differently.

As I prayed, as I found my voice, something surfaced for me — a recognition both familiar and gentle. As a child, I had seen my grandfather davven often enough. In shul, he and his congregation would *shokl*—a quick, rhythmic motion back and forth, as if they were all about to walk forward but were rooted in place. The more impassioned their prayer, the faster, the more heedlessly, they rocked. Decades later, davvening, I found this unexpected connection to my grandfather: a shared choreography of holy time. Prayer moved me, not just spiritually, but physically, like it once moved him.

But there was a difference. Where my grandfather rocked forward and back, ready to be propelled outward or upward, to soar wherever it was that his prayer led him, my shokl was the gentle side-to-side that I'd found in my son's infancy. It was not meant to propel me, but to flow, like oceans. Like time. One kind of shokling was not better than the other. Just different. Gendered.

Years have passed. My son is preparing to become a bar mitzvah. I drive him to his tutor's, but I am not his teacher. Not for this. He has a community upon whom he can depend, who have so much to teach and share with him. So I was surprised, when I nagged him a little to practice the other day, that he asked if I would chant with him, pray with him.

I held my breath and nodded, hoping I appeared calm and nonchalant, while inwardly doing a little happy-dance-of-joy. I did not want to frighten him.

Mom, will you pray with me?

And he came and stood next to me as I sat at the table, my not-so-tall boy, my not-yet man. And he nestled his body next to mine and we prayed, and there came that gentle side-to-side rock, and our hearts beating in a call and response, one beat answering to the next—ancient, familiar, stately.

And we davvened, cradled, and I loved the warmth of him, the smell of his newness and his infinite possibilities, the slow, maternal shokl of eternity.

Stacey Zisook Robinson lives in Skokie, Illinois, where she is a single mother, an accounts manager, and a Jewish educator. She blogs at staceyzrobinson.blogspot.com.